

1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly upon him; for godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. It is promised,

(1.) That he shall be *very rich*, ver. 24. *Thou shalt lay up gold as dust*, in such great abundance, and *shalt have plenty of silver*, ver. 25. whereas now thou art poor, and stripped of all. Job had been rich; Eliphaz suspected he got his riches by fraud and oppression, and therefore they were taken from him: But if he would return to God and duty, (1.) He should have more wealth than ever he had; not only thousands of sheep and oxen, the wealth of farmers, but thousands of gold and silver, the wealth of princes, Job iii. 15. There is abundantly more riches, true riches, to be got by the service of God, than by the service of the world. (2.) He should have it more sure to him, *thou shalt lay it up*, in good hands, and hold that which is got by thy piety, by a surer tenure than that which thou gottest by thine iniquity. Thou shalt have silver of strength; for so the word is, which being honestly got, will wear well; silver like steel. (3.) He should, by the grace of God, be kept from setting his heart so much upon it, as Eliphaz thought he had done: And then wealth is a blessing indeed, when we are not ensnared with the love of it: Thou shalt lay up gold; but how? not as thy treasure and portion, but *as dust*, and *as the stones of the brooks*: So little shalt thou value it, or expect from it, thou shalt lay it at thy feet, (Acts iv. 35.) not in thy bosom.

(2.) That yet he shall be very safe; whereas mens riches usually expose them to danger, and he had owned that in his prosperity he was not in safety, chap. iii. 26. now he might be secure; for the Almighty shall be thy defender; nay, he shall be thy defence, ver. 25. He shall be thy gold; so it is in the margin, and it is the same word that is used, ver. 24. for gold, but it signifies also a strong hold, because money is a defence, Eccles. vii. 12. Worldlings make gold their God, faints make God their gold; and they that are enriched with his favour and grace, may truly be said to have abundance of the best gold, and best laid up. We read it, He shall be thy defence against the incursions of neighbouring spoilers: Thy wealth shall not then lie exposed as it did to Sabeans and Chaldeans; which some think is the meaning of that, *Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle*; taking it as a promise. The iniquity or wrong designed against thee shall be put off, and shall not reach thee. Note, Those must needs be safe, and they be secure, that have omnipotence itself for their defence, Psal. xci. 1, 2, 3.

2. That his soul should prosper, and he should be enriched with spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings.

(1.) That he should live a life of complacency in God, ver. 26. *For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty*; and thus the Almighty comes to be thy gold, by thy delighting in him, as worldly people delight in their money. He shall be thy wealth, thy defence, thy dignity; for he shall be thy delight. The way to have our hearts desire, is to make God our hearts delight, Psal. xxxvii. 4. If God give us himself to be our joy, he will deny us nothing that is good for us. Now God is a terror to thee, he is so by thine own confession, chap. vi. 4.—xvi. 9.—xix. 11. But if thou wilt return to him, then, then, not till then, *he will be thy delight*; and it shall be as much a pleasure to thee to think of him, as ever it was a pain. No delight is comparable to the delight which gracious souls have in the Almighty: And those that acquaint themselves with him, and submit themselves entirely to him, shall find his favour to be not only their strength, but their song.

(2.) That he should have a humble, holy confidence towards God; such as they are said to have *whose hearts condemn them not*; 1 John iii. 21. Then shalt thou lift up thy face to God with boldness, and not be afraid, as thou now art, to draw near to him. Thy countenance is now fallen, and thou lookest dejected, but when thou hast made thy peace with God, thou shalt blush no more, tremble no more, as now thou dost, and hang thy head no more, but shalt cheerfully, and with a gracious assurance, shew thyself to him, pray before him, and expect blessings from him.

(3.) That he should maintain a constant communion with God: The correspondence once settled, shall be kept up to thine unspeakable satisfaction. Letters shall be both statedly and occasionally interchanged between thee and heaven, ver. 27. (1.) Thou shalt by prayer send letters to God; *Thou shalt make thy prayer* (the word is, *Thou shalt multiply thy prayers*) unto him, and he will not think thy letters troublesome, tho' many and long: The oftner we come to the throne of grace, the more welcome. Under all thy burthens, in all thy wants, cares, and fears, thou shalt send to heaven for guidance and strength, wisdom, comfort, and good success. (2.) He shall by his providence and grace answer those letters, and give thee what thou askest of him, either in kind, or kindness: *He shall hear thee*, and make it to appear he doth so, by what he doth for thee, and in thee. (3.) Then thou shalt by thy praises reply to the gracious answers which he sent thee: *Thou shalt pay thy vows*, and that shall be acceptable to him, and fetch in further mercy. Note, When God performs that which in our distress we prayed for, we must make conscience of performing that which we then promised, else we do not deal honestly. If we promised nothing else, we promised to be thankful, and that is enough, for it includes all, Psal. cxvi. 14.

4. That he should have inward satisfaction in the management of all his outward affairs, ver. 28. *Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall*

be established unto thee, i. e. Thou shalt frame all thy projects and purposes with so much wisdom and grace, and resignation to the will of God, that the issue of them shall be to thy hearts content; just as thou wouldst have it to be: Thou shalt commit thy works unto the Lord, by faith and prayer; and then thy thoughts shall be established; thou shalt be easy and pleased, whatsoever comes, Prov. xvi. 3. This the grace of God shall work in thee; nay, sometimes the providence of God shall give thee the very thing thou didst desire and pray for, and give it thee in thine own way, and manner, and time: *Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt*. When at any any time an affair succeeds just according to the scheme we laid, and our measures are in nothing broke, nor are we put upon new counsels, then we must own the performance of this promise, *Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee*. Whereas now thou complaineest of darkness round about thee, there then *the light shall shine on thy ways*; i. e. God shall guide and direct thee, and then it will follow of course that he shall prosper and succeed thee in all thine undertakings. God's wisdom shall be thy conduct, and his favour thy comfort; and thy ways shall be so under both those lights, as that thou shalt have a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable prospect of what is future, Psal. xc. 17.

(5.) That even in times of common calamity and danger, he should have abundance of joy and hope, ver. 29. *When men are cast down round about thee, cast down in their affairs, cast down in their spirits, sinking, desponding, and ready to despair, then shalt thou say, there is lifting up*: Thou shalt find that in thy self which will not only bear thee up under thy troubles, and keep thee from fainting, but lift thee up above thy troubles, and enable thee to rejoice evermore: When mens hearts fail them for fear, then shall Christ's disciples lift up their heads for joy, Luke xxi. 26—28. Thus are they made to ride upon the high places of the earth, Isa. lviii. 14. and that which will lift them up, is the belief of this, that God will save the humble person: They that humble themselves shall be exalted, not only in honour but in comfort.

3. That he should be a blessing to his country, and an instrument of good to many, ver. 30. *God shall*, in answer to thy prayers, deliver the island of the innocent, and have a regard therein to the pureness of thy hands, which is necessary to the acceptableness of our prayers, 1 Tim. ii. 8. But because we may suppose the innocent not to need deliverance, it was guilty Sodom that wanted the benefit of Abraham's intercession, I incline to the marginal reading, *The innocent shall deliver the island*, by their advice, Eccl. ix. 14, 15. and by their prayers and their interest in heaven, Acts xvii. 24. Or, *He shall deliver those that are not innocent, and they are delivered by the pureness of thy hands*; so it may be read, and most probably. Note, A good man is a publick good. Sinners fare the better for faints, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby (as some think he did) to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure, for then he would have relieved others, much more himself, he was afterwards made to see his error, when it appeared that Job had a better interest in heaven than he had; for he and his three friends, who in this matter were not innocent, were delivered by the pureness of Job's hands, Job. xlii. 8.

C H A P. XXIII.

The chapter begins Job's reply to Eliphaz; and in this reply he takes no notice of his friends, either because he saw it was to no purpose; or because he liked the good counsel Eliphaz gave him in the close of his discourse so well, that he would make no answer to the peevish reflections he began with; but he appeals to God; begs to have his cause heard, and doubts not but to make it good; having the testimony of his own conscience concerning his integrity. Here seems to be a struggle between flesh and spirit, fear and faith, throughout this chapter. (1.) He complains of his calamitous condition, and especially of God's withdrawings from him, so that he could not get his appeal heard, ver. 2—5. nor discern the meaning of God's dealings with him, ver. 8, 9. nor gain any hope of relief, ver. 13, 14. And this made deep impressions of trouble and terror upon him, ver. 15—17. But, (2.) In the midst of these complaints, he comforts himself with the assurance of God's clemency, ver. 6, 7. and his own integrity, which God himself was a witness to, ver. 10—12. Thus was the light of his day like that spoken of, Zech. xiv. 6, 7. neither perfectly clear, nor perfectly dark, but at evening time it was light.

1. **T**HEN Job answered and said, 2. Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groning. 3. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! 4. I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. 5. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. 6. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. 7. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.

Job

Job is satisfied that he has wrong done him by his friends, and therefore, as ill as he is, he will not give up the cause, nor let them have the last word. Here,

1. He justifies his own resentments and remonstrances of his trouble, *ver. 2. Even to day, I own, my complaint is bitter*; for the affliction, the cause of the complaint, is so; There is *wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery, my soul has them still in remembrance*, and is embittered by them, *Lam. iii. 19, 20. Even to day is my complaint counted rebellion*; so some read it; his friends construed the innocent expressions of his grief, as reflections upon God and his providence, and called them rebellion: But, saith he, I do not complain more than there is cause, *for my stroke is heavier than my groaning*. Even to-day, after all you have said to convince and comfort me, still the pain of my body, and the wounds of my spirit are such, that I have reason enough for my complaints, if they were more bitter than they are. We wrong God, if our groaning be heavier than our stroke; like froward children, who when they cry for nothing, have justly something given them to cry for; but we do not wrong our selves, tho' our stroke be heavier than our groaning, for little said is soon amended.

2. He appeals from the censures of his friends, to the just judgment of God; and this he thought was an evidence for him that he was not an hypocrite, for then he durst not have made such an appeal as this. St Paul comforts himself in this, that *he that judged him was the Lord*, and therefore he valued not man's judgment, *1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.* but he is willing to wait till the appointed day of decision; whereas Job is impatient, and passionately wishes to have the judgment-day anticipated, and to have his cause tried quickly, as it were, by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer. The apostle found it necessary to press it much upon suffering Christians, patiently to expect the Judge's coming, *Jam. v. 7, 8, 9.*

(1.) He is so sure of the equity of God's tribunal, that he longs to appear before it, *ver. 3. O that I knew where I might find him!* This may properly speak the pious breathings of a soul convinced it has by sin lost God, and is undone for ever, if it recover not its interest in his favour: O that I knew how I might recover his favour! How I might come into covenant and communion with him! *Mic. vi. 6, 7.* It is the cry of a poor deserted soul, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? O that I knew where I might find him!* O that he who has laid open the way to him, would direct me into it, and lead me in it! But Job here seems to speak it too boldly, that his friends wronged him, and he knew not which way to apply himself to God to have justice done him, else he would come, even to his seat, to demand it: A patient waiting for death and judgment, is our wisdom and duty, and if we duly consider things, that cannot be without a holy fear and trembling; but a passionate wishing for death or judgment, without any such fear and trembling, is our sin and folly, and ill becomes us. Do we know what death and judgment are, and are we so very ready for them, that we need not time to get readier? *Wo to them that, thus in a heat, desire the day of the Lord, Amos v. 18.*

(2.) He is so sure of the goodness of his own cause, that he longs to be opening it at God's bar, *ver. 4. I would order my cause before him*, and set it in a true light; I would produce the evidences of my sincerity in a proper method, and would *fill my mouth with arguments* to prove it. We may apply this to the duty of prayer, in which we have *boldness to enter into the holiest*, and to come even to the footstool of the throne of grace: And we have not only liberty of access, but liberty of speech. We have leave, (1.) To be particular in our requests, *to order our cause before God*, to speak the whole matter, to lay before him all our grievances, in what method we think most proper; we durst not be so free with earthly princes, as an humble holy soul may be with God. (2.) To be importunate in our requests: We are allowed not only to pray, but to plead; not only to ask, but to argue; nay, to *fill our mouths with arguments*: Not to move God; he is perfectly apprized of the merits of the cause without our shewing; but to move our selves, to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith in prayer.

(3.) He is so sure of a sentence in favour of him, that he even longed to hear it, *ver. 5. I would know the words which he would answer me, i. e. I would gladly hear what God will say to this matter in dispute between you and me, and will entirely acquiesce in his judgment.* This becomes us in all controversies; let the word of God determine them; let us know what he answers, and understand what he saith. Job knew well enough what his friends would answer him; they would condemn him, and run him down; but (saith he) *I would fain know what God would answer me*; for I am sure his judgment is according to truth, which theirs is not: I cannot understand them they talk so little to the purpose; but what he saith, I should understand, and therefore be fully satisfied in.

3. He comforts himself with hopes that God would deal favourably with him in this matter, *ver. 6, 7.* Note, It is of great use to us in every thing wherein we have to do with God, to keep up good thoughts of him. He believes,

1. That God would not over-power him; that he would not deal with him either by absolute sovereignty, or in strict justice; not with a high hand, not with a strong hand: *will he plead against me with his great power?* No, Job's friends pleaded against him

with all the power they had; but will God do so? No, his power is all just and holy; whatever mens is: against those that are obstinate in their unbelief and impenitency, God will *plead with his great power*, their destruction will come from the glory of his power; but with his own people, that love him and trust in him, he will deal in tender compassion.

2. That, on the contrary, he would empower him to plead his own cause before God. *He would put strength in me*, to support me, and bear me up, in maintaining mine integrity. Note, The same power that is engaged against proud sinners, is engaged for humble saints, who prevail with God by strength derived from him, as Jacob did, *Hof. xii. 3.* See *Psal. lxviii. ult.*

3. That the issue would certainly be comfortable, *ver. 7.* There, in the court of heaven, when the final sentence is to be given, *the righteous might dispute with him*, and come off in his righteousness. Now even the upright are often *chastened of the Lord*, and they cannot dispute against it: integrity it self is no fence either against calamity or calumny: but in that day, *they shall not be condemned with the world*, tho' God may afflict by prerogative: *Then you shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, Mal. iii. 18.* So vast will be the difference between them in their everlasting state, whereas now, we can scarce distinguish them; so little is the difference between them as to their outward condition, for all things come alike to all. Then, when the final doom is given, *I shall be delivered for ever from my judge, i. e. I shall be saved from the unjust censures of my friends, and from that divine sentence which is now so much a terror to me.* Those that are delivered up to God as their owner and ruler, shall be for ever delivered from him as their judge and avenger: and there is no flying from his justice, but by flying to his mercy.

8. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: 9. On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. 10. But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. 11. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. 12. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips, I have esteemed the words of his mouth, more than my necessary food.

Here, 1. Job complains that he cannot understand the meaning of God's providences concerning him, but was quite at a loss about them, *ver. 8, 9. I go forward, but he is not there, &c.* Eliphaz had bid him acquaint himself with God; so I would with all my heart, saith Job, if I knew how to get acquainted with him. He had himself a great desire to appear before God, and get a hearing of his case, but the Judge was not to be found; look which way he would, he could see no sign of God's appearing for him to clear up his innocency: Job, no doubt, believed that God is every where present; but three things he seems to complain of here, (1.) That he could not fix his thoughts, nor form any clear judgment of things in his own mind: his mind was so hurried and discomposed with his troubles, that he was like a man in a fright, or at his wits end, that runs this way, and that way, but being in confusion brings nothing to a head. By reason of the disorder and tumult his spirit was in, he could not fasten upon that which he knew to be in God, and which if he could but mix faith with it, and dwell upon it in his thoughts, would be a support to him. It is the common complaint of those who are sick or melancholy, that when they would think of that which is good, they can make nothing of it. (2.) That he could not find out the cause of his troubles, nor the sin which provoked God to contend with him: he took a view of his whole conversation, turned to every side of it, and could not perceive wherein he had sinned more than others, for which he should thus be punished more than others; nor could he discern what other end God should aim at in afflicting him thus. (3.) That he could not foresee what would be in the end hereof, whether God would deliver him at all, nor if he did, when or which way: he saw not his signs, nor was there any to tell him how long; as the church complains, *Psal. lxxiv. 9.* He was quite at a loss, what to think God would do with him; and whatever conjecture he advanced, still something or other appeared against it.

2. He satisfies himself with this, that God himself was a witness to his integrity, and therefore did not doubt but the issue would be good. After Job had almost lost himself in the labyrinth of the divine counsels, how contentedly doth he sit down at length with this thought, though I know not the way that he takes, for *his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters*; his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and it would be presumption in us to pretend to judge of them: Yet *he knows the ways that I take*, *ver. 10.* That is, (1.) He is acquainted with it: His friends judged of that which they did not know, and therefore charged him with that which he was never guilty of; but God, who knew every step he had taken, would not do so, *Psal. cxxxix. 3.* Note, It is a great comfort to those who mean honestly, that God understands

understands their meaning, tho' men do not, cannot, or will not. (2.) He approves of it: He knows that however I may sometimes have taken a false step, yet I have still taken a good way; have chosen the way of truth, and therefore he knows it; i. e. He accepts it, and is well pleased with it, as he is said to know the way of the righteous, Psal. i. 6. This comforted the prophet, Jer. xii. 3. *Thou hadst tried my heart, towards thee.* From this Job infers, *when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.* They that keep the way of the Lord, may comfort themselves when they are in affliction, with these three things. (1.) That they are but tried; it is not intended for their hurt, but for their honour and benefit; *it is the trial of their faith*, 1 Pet. i. 7. (2.) That when they are sufficiently tried, they shall come forth, out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it, as dross, or reprobate silver. The trial will have an end; *God will not contend for ever.* (3.) That they shall come forth as gold, pure in it self, and precious to the refiner: they shall come forth as gold approved and improved; found to be good, and made to be better. Afflictions are to us, as we are; those that go gold into the furnace, will come out no worse.

Now that which encouraged Job to hope that his present troubles would thus end well, was the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had lived a good life, in the fear of God.

1. That God's way, was the way he walked in, ver. 11. *My foot hath held his steps*, i. e. held to them, held close to them: the steps he takes; I have endeavoured to conform my self to his example. Good people are followers of God: or, I have accommodated my self to his providence, and endeavoured to answer all the intentions of that; to follow providence step by step. Or, his steps are the steps he hath appointed me to take; the way of religion and serious godliness, that way I have kept, and have not declined from it; not only not turned back from it, by a total apostasy, but not turned aside out of it by any wilful transgression. His holding God's steps, and keeping his way, intimates that the tempter had used all his arts by fraud and force to draw him aside; but, with care and resolution, he had by the grace of God hitherto persevered, and those that will do so, must hold and keep, hold with resolution, and keep with watchfulness.

2. That God's word was the rule he walked by, ver. 12. he governed himself by the commandment of God's lips; and would not go back from that, but go forward according to it. Whatever difficulties we may meet with in the way of God's commandments, tho' they lead us thro' a wilderness, yet we must never think of going back, but must press on towards the mark. Job kept close to the law of God in his conversation, for both his judgment and his affection led him to it. *I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food*, i. e. He looked upon it as his necessary food, could as well have lived without his daily bread, as without the word of God. I have laid it up, so the word is, as those that lay up provision for a siege; or as Joseph laid up corn before the famine. Eliphaz had bid him *lay up Gods words in his heart*, chap. xxii. 22. So I do, saith he, and always did; *that I might not sin against him*; and that, like the good householder, I might bring forth for the good of others. Note, The word of God is to our souls, as our necessary food is to our bodies; it sustains the spiritual life, and strengthens us for the actions of life; it is that which we cannot subsist without, and which nothing else can make up the want of: and we ought therefore so to esteem it, to take pains for it, hunger after it, feed upon it with delight, and nourish our souls with it; and this will be our rejoicing in the day of evil, as it was Job's here.

13. But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. 14. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him. 15. Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him. 16. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me: 17. Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

Some make Job to complain here, that God dealt unjustly and unfairly with him, in proceeding to punish him, without the least relenting, or relaxation, tho' he had such incontestible evidences to produce of his innocency: I am loth to think holy Job would charge the holy God with iniquity; but his complaint is indeed bitter, and peevish enough, and he reasons himself into a sort of a patience per force, which he cannot do without reflecting upon God, as dealing hardly with him; but he must bear it, because he cannot help it; the worst he saith is, that God deals unaccountably with him.

1. He lays down good truths, and which were capable of a good improvement, ver. 13, 14.

(1.) That God's counsels are immutable. *He is in one mind, and who can turn him? He is one.* So some read it, or in one; he has no counsellors by whose interest he might be prevailed with to alter his purpose: he is one with himself, and never alters his mind, never alters his measures. Prayer has prevailed No. xxxvi.

to change God's way, and his providence; but never was his will or purpose changed: for *known unto God are all his works.*

(2.) That his power is irresistible. *What his soul desireth*, or designs, even that he doth, and nothing can stand in his way, or put him upon new counsels. Men desire many things, which either they may not do, or cannot do, or dare not do; but God has an incontestible sovereignty; his will is so perfectly pure and right, that it is highly fit he should be arbitrary: and he has an uncontrollable power; *none can stay his hand.* *Whatever the Lord pleased that did he*, Psal. cxxxv. 6. and always will, for it is always best.

(3.) That all he doth, is according to the counsel of his will, ver. 14. *He performeth the thing that is appointed for me*: whatever happens to us, it is God that performs it. Psal. lvii. 2. and an admirable performance the whole will appear to be, when the mystery of God shall be finished. He performs all that, and that only, that was appointed, and in the appointed time and method: this may silence us, for what is appointed cannot be altered. But to consider that when God was appointing us to eternal life and glory, as our end, he was appointing to this condition, this affliction, whatever it is, in our way; this may do more than silence us, it may satisfy us, that it is all for the best; and tho' what he doth we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

(4.) That all he doth is according to the custom of his providence. *Many such things are with him*, i. e. He doth many things in the course of his providence, which we can give no account of, but must resolve into his absolute sovereignty. Whatever trouble we are in, others have been in the like; our case is not singular, the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren, 1 Pet. v. 9. Are we sick, or sore, impoverished and stripped, children removed by death, or friends unkind, this is what God has appointed for us, and many such things are with him. *Shall the earth be forsaken for us?*

2. He makes but a bad use of these good truths; had he duly considered them, he might have said, therefore am I easy and pleased, and well reconciled to the way of my God concerning me; therefore will I rejoice, in hope that my troubles will issue well at last. No, *Therefore am I troubled at his presence*, ver. 15. Those are indeed of troubled spirits who are troubled at the presence of God; as the psalmist, who remembered God, and was troubled, Psal. lxxvii. 3. See what confusion poor Job was now in, for he contradicted himself: just now he was troubled for God's absence, ver. 8, 9. now he is troubled at his presence. *When I consider, I am afraid of him.* What he now felt made him fear worse: there is indeed that, which if we consider, we shall see cause to be afraid of God; his infinite justice and purity, compared with our own sinfulness and vileness; but if withal, we consider his grace in a Redeemer, and our compliance with that grace, the fears will vanish, and we shall see cause to hope in him.

See what impressions were made upon him by the wounds of his spirit. (1.) He was very fearful, ver. 14. *The Almighty troubled him*, and so made his heart soft; i. e. utterly unable to bear any thing, and afraid of every thing that stirred: there is a gracious softness, like that of Josiah, whose heart was tender, and trembled at the word of God. This is meant of a grievous softness, which apprehends every thing that is present to be pressing, and every thing future to be threatening. (2.) He was very fretful, peevish indeed, for he quarrels with God, ver. 17. (1.) Because he did not die before his troubles, that he might never have seen them: *because I was not cut off before the darkness*; and yet if in the height of his prosperity, he had received a summons to the grave, he would have thought it hard. This may help to reconcile us to death, whenever it comes, that we do not know what evil we may be taken away from. But when trouble is come, it is folly to wish we had not lived to see it, and it is better to make the best of it. (2.) Because he was left to live so long in his troubles, and the darkness was not covered from his face, by his being hid in the grave: we should bear the darkness better than thus, if we would but remember, that to the upright there sometimes ariseth a marvellous light in the darkness; however, there is reserved for them a more marvellous light after it.

C H A P. XXIV.

Job having, by his complaints in the foregoing chapter, given vent to his passion, and thereby gained some ease, breaks them off abruptly, and now applies himself to a farther discussion of the doctrinal controversy between him and his friends, concerning the prosperity of wicked people. That many live at ease who yet are ungodly and profane, and despise all the exercises of devotion, he had shewed chap. xxi. Now here he goes further, and shews that many who are mischievous to mankind, and live in open defiance to all the laws of justice and common honesty, yet thrive and succeed in their unrighteous practices; and we do not see them reckoned with in this world. What he had said before, chap. xii. 6. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, he here enlargeth upon. He lays down his general proposition, ver. 1. *That the punishment of wicked people, is not so visible and apparent as his friends supposed; and then*

proves it by an induction of particulars. (1.) Those that openly do wrong to their poor neighbours, are not reckoned with, nor the injured righted, ver. 2—12. tho' they are very barbarous, ver. 21, 22. (2.) Those that secretly practise mischief, often go undiscovered and unpunished, ver. 13—17. (3.) That God punisheth such by secret judgments, and reserves them for future judgments, ver. 18—20. and ver. 23—25. So that upon the whole matter, we cannot say, that all that are in trouble are wicked; for it is certain, all that are in prosperity are not righteous.

1. **W**H Y, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him, not see his Days? 2. Some remove the land-marks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof. 3. They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widows ox for a pledge. 4. They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together. 5. Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work, rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children. 6. They reap every one his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked. 7. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold. 8. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter. 9. They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. 10. They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry. 11. Which make oil within their walls, and tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst. 12. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.

Job's friends had been very positive in it, that they should soon see the fall of wicked people, how much soever they might prosper for a while: by no means, saith Job, *tho' times are not hidden from the Almighty*, yet they that know him do not presently see his day. ver. 1. (1.) He takes it for granted, that times are not hidden from the Almighty; past times are not hid from his judgment, (*Eccles. iii. 15.*) present times are not hid from his providence, (*Mat. x. 29.*) future times are not hid from his prescience, (*Acts xv. 18.*) God governs the world, and therefore we may be sure he takes cognizance of it: bad times are not hid from him, tho' the bad men that make the times bad, say one to another, that he has forsaken the earth, *Psal. xciv. 6, 7.* Every man's times are in his hand, and under his eye, and therefore it is in his power to make the times of wicked men, in this world, miserable: he foresees the time of every man's death, and therefore if wicked men die before they are punished for their wickedness, we cannot say, they escaped him by surprize; he foresaw it, nay, he ordered it. Before Job will enquire into the reasons of the prosperity of wicked men, he asserts God's omniscience, as one prophet in a like case asserts his righteousness, *Jer. xii. 1.* another his holiness, *Hab. i. 13.* another his goodness to his own people, *Psal. lxxiii. 1.* General truths must be held fast, tho' we may find it difficult to reconcile them to particular events. (2.) He yet asserts, that they that know him, *i. e.* wise and good people that are acquainted with him, and with whom his secret is, do not see his days, not the day of his judging for them, this was the thing he complained of in his own case, *chap. xxiii. 8.* That he could not see God appearing on his behalf to plead his cause: Nor the day of his judging against open and notorious sinners, that is called *his day*, *Psal. xxxvii. 13.* We believe that day will come, but we do not see it, because it is future, and its presages secret. (3.) Tho' this is a mystery of providence, yet there is a reason for it, and we shall shortly know why and wherefore the judgment is deferred; and even the wisest, and those that know God best, do not yet see it: God will exercise their faith and patience, and excite their prayers for the coming of his kingdom, for which they are to cry day and night to him, *Luke xviii. 7.*

For the proof of this, that wicked people prosper, he instanceth in two sorts of unrighteous ones, whom all the world saw thriving in their iniquity.

1. Tyrants, and those that do wrong, under pretence of law and authority. It is a melancholy sight which has often been seen under the sun, wickedness in the place of judgment, *Eccles. iii. 16.* The unregarded tears of the oppressed, while on the side of the oppressors there was power, *Eccles. iv. 1.* The violent perverting of justice and judgment, *Eccles. v. 8.*

(1.) They disseize their neighbours of their real estates, which came to them by descent from their ancestors. They remove the land-marks, under pretence that they were misplaced, ver. 2. and so they encroached upon their neighbours rights, and think they effectually secure that to their posterity which they have got wrongfully, by making that to be an evidence for them, which should have been an evidence for the rightful owner. This was forbidden by the law of Moses, *Deut. xix. 14.* under a curse,

Deut. xxvii. 17. Forging or destroying deeds; is now a crime equivalent to this here.

(2.) They dispossess them of their personal estates, under colour of justice, they violently take away flocks, pretending they are forfeited, and feed thereof; as the rich man took the poor man's ewe-lamb, *2 Sam. xii. 4.* If a poor fatherless child hath but an ass of his own to get a little money with, they find some colour or other to take it away, because the owner is not able to contest with them. It is all one if a widow has but an ox, for what little husbandry she hath, under pretence of distraining for some small debt, or arrears of rent, this ox shall be taken for a pledge, tho' perhaps it is the widow's all. God has taken it among the titles of his honour to be a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows; and therefore those will not be reckoned his friends, that do not to their utmost to protect and help them; but those he will certainly reckon with as his enemies that vex and oppress them.

(3.) They take all occasions to offer personal abuses to them, ver. 4. They will mislead them if they can, when they meet them on the high-way, so that the poor and needy are forced to hide themselves from them; having no other way to secure themselves from them. They love in their hearts to banter people, and to make fools of them, and do them a mischief if they can, especially to triumph over a poor body, whom they turn out of the way of getting relief, threaten to punish them as vagabonds, and so force them to abscond, and laugh at them when they have done.

Some understand those barbarous actions, ver. 9, 10. to be done by those oppressors that pretend law for what they do. They pluck the fatherless from the breast: *i. e.* having made poor infants fatherless they make them motherless too; having taken away the father's life, they break the mother's heart, and so starve the children, and leave them to perish. Pharaoh and Herod plucked the children from the breast to the sword; and we read of children brought forth to the murderers, *Hos. ix. 13.* And those are inhuman murderers indeed, that can with so much pleasure suck innocent blood. They take a pledge of the poor, and so they rob the spittal; nay, they take the poor themselves for a pledge, as some read it, and probably it was under this pretence that they plucked the fatherless from the breast, distraining them for slaves, as *Neb. v. 5.* Cruelty to the poor is great wickedness, and cries aloud for vengeance. Those who shew no mercy to them that lie at their mercy, shall themselves have judgment without mercy.

Another instance of their barbarous usage of those they have advantage against, is, that they take from them even their necessary food and raiment: they squeeze them so with their extortion, that they make them go naked without clothing, ver. 10. and so catch their death. And if a poor hungry family has gleaned a sheaf of corn, to make a little cake of, that they may eat it and die; even that they take away from them, being well pleased to see them perish for want, while they themselves are fed to the full.

(4.) They are very oppressive to the labourers they employ in their service: they not only give them no wages, tho' the labourer is worthy of his hire; and this is a crying sin, *Jam. v. 4.* but they will not so much as give them meat and drink: those that carry their sheaves are hungry; so some read it, ver. 10. and it agrees with ver. 11. that those who make oil within their walls, and with a great deal of toil labour at the wine-presses, yet suffer thirst, which was worse than muzzling the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Those masters forget that they have a Master in heaven, who will not allow the necessary supports of life to their servants and labourers, not caring whether they can live by their labour.

(5.) It is not only among the poor country-people, but in the cities also that we see the tears of the oppressed, ver. 12. men groan from out of the city, where the rich merchants and traders are as cruel with their poor debtors, as the landlords in the country are with their poor tenants. In cities such cruel actions as these are more observed than in obscure corners of the country, and the wronged have easier access to justice to right themselves, and yet the oppressors there fear neither the restraints of the law, nor the just censures of their neighbours; but the oppressed groan and cry out like wounded men, and can no more ease and help themselves, for the oppressors are inexorable, and deaf to their groans.

2. He speaks of robbers and rapparees, and those that do wrong by downright force, as the bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, which had lately plundered him: he doth not instance particularly in them, lest he should seem partial to his own cause, and to judge of men (as we are apt to do) by what they are to us: but among the Arabians, the children of the east (Job's country) there were those that lived by spoil and rapine, making incursions upon their neighbours, and robbing travellers. See how they are described here, and what mischief they do, ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. (1.) Their character is that they are as wild asses in the desert, untamed, untractable, unreasonable, Ishmael's character, *Gen. xvi. 13.* fierce and furious, and under no restraint of law or government, *Jer. ii. 23, 24.* They chuse the deserts for their dwelling, that they may be lawless and unsociable, and that they may have opportunity of doing the more mischief. The desert is indeed the fittest place for such wild people, *Job xxxix. 6.* But no desert can set men out of the reach of God's eye and hand. (2.) Their trade is to steal, and to make a prey of all about them. They have chosen it as their

their trade; it is their work, because there is more to be got by it, and it is gotten easier, than by an honest calling. They follow it as their trade, they follow it close; they go forth to it as their work, as man goes forth to his labour, *Psal. civ. 23.* They are diligent and take pains at it, they rise betimes for a prey; if a traveller be out early, they will be out as soon to rob him: they live by it as a man lives by his trade; the wilderness, not the grounds there but the roads there, *yield food for them and for their children*: they maintain themselves and their families by robbing on the high-way, and bless themselves in it without any remorse of compassion or conscience, and with as much security as if it were honestly got, as Ephraim, *Hof. xii. 7, 8.* (3.) See the mischief they do to the country. They not only rob travellers, but they make incursions upon their neighbours, and *reap every one his corn in the field*, ver. 6. *i. e.* They enter upon other peoples ground, cut their corn, and carry it away as freely as if it were their own: even the wicked gather the vintage, and it is their wickedness; or, as we read it, they gather the vintage of the wicked, and so one wicked man is made a scourge to another. What the wicked got by extortion, which is their way of stealing, these robbers get from them in their way of stealing: thus oftentimes are the spoilers spoiled, *Isa. xxxiii. 1.* (4.) The misery of those that fall into their hands, ver. 7, 8. *They cause the naked* whom they have stripped, not leaving them the clothes to their backs, to lodge in the cold nights without clothing, so that they are wet with the showers of the mountains; and, for want of a better shelter, embrace the rock, and are glad of a cave or den in it to preserve them from the injuries of the weather. Eliphaz had charged Job with such inhumanity as this, concluding that providence would not thus have stripped him if he had not first *stripped the naked of their clothing*, chap. xxii. 6. Job here tells him, there were those that were really guilty of those crimes with which he was unjustly charged, and yet prospered and had success in their villainies; the curse they laid themselves under working invisibly: and Job thinks it more just to argue as he did, from an open notorious course of wickedness to infer a secret and future punishment, than to argue as Eliphaz did, who from nothing else but a present trouble inferred a passed course of secret wickedness.

The impunity of these oppressors and spoilers is expressed in one word, ver. 12. *Yet God layeth not folly to them*, *i. e.* he doth not immediately prosecute them with his judgments for these crimes, nor make them examples, and so evince their folly to all the world. He that gets riches, and not by right, at his end shall be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11. But while he prospers he passes for a wise man, and God lays not folly to him until he faith, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, Luke xii. 20.

13. They are of those that rebel against the light, they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. 14. The murderer rising with the light, killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. 15. The eye also of the adulterers waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face. 16. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day-time: they know not the light. 17. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

These verses describe another sort of sinners who therefore go unpunished, because they go undiscovered. *They rebel against the light*, ver. 13. Some understand it figuratively; they sin against the light of nature, the light of God's law, and that of their own consciences: they profess to know God, but they rebel against the knowledge they have of him, and will not be guided and governed, commanded and controlled by it. Others understand it literally: they have the day-light, and chuse the night as the most advantageous season for their wickedness. Sinful works are therefore called *works of darkness*, because he that doth evil, hates the light, John iii. 20. *knows not the ways thereof*, *i. e.* keeps out of the way of it, or if he happen to be seen, he abides not where he thinks he is known. So that he here describes the worst of sinners (1.) That sin wilfully, and against the convictions of their own consciences, whereby they add rebellion to their sin. (2.) That sin deliberately, and with a great deal of plot and contrivance, using a thousand arts to conceal their villainies, fondly imagining that if they can but hide them from the eye of men, they are safe, but forgetting that *there is no darkness or shadow of death in which the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from God's eye*, Job xxxiv. 22.

He instances in three sorts of sinners that shun the light.

1. Murderers, ver. 14. They rise with the light, as soon as ever the day breaks, to kill the poor travellers that are up early, and abroad about their business, going to market with a little money or goods; and tho' it is so little that they are really to be called poor and needy, that with much ado get a sorry livelihood by their marketings, yet to get it the murderer will both take his neighbour's life, and venture his own; will rather play at such small game than sit out: nay, he kills for killing

fake, thirsting more for blood than booty. See what care and pains wicked men take to compass their wicked designs, and let it shame us out of our negligence and slothfulness in doing good.

*Ut jugulent homines surgunt de nocte latrones,
Tuque ut te serves non expergiseris?—*

2. Adulterers: *the eyes that are full of adultery*, (2 Pet. ii. 14.) the unclean and wanton eyes wait for the twilight, ver. 15. The eye of the adulterers did so, *Prov. vii. 9.* Adultery hides its head for shame: the sinners themselves, even the most impudent, do what they can to hide it: *si non caste, tamen caute*; and after all the wretched endeavours of the factors for hell, to take away the reproach of it, it is and ever will be a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret, Eph. v. 12. It hides its head also for fear, knowing that *jealousy is the rage of a husband*, who will not spare in the day of vengeance, *Prov. vi. 34, 35.* See what pains those take that make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust of it! pains to compass, and then to conceal that provision, which after all will be death and hell at last. Less pains would serve to mortify and crucify the flesh, which would be life and heaven at last: let the sinner change his heart, and then he needs not disguise his face, but may lift it up without spot.

3. House-breakers, ver. 16. These mark houses in the day-time, mark the avenues of a house, and on which side they can most easily force their entrance, and then in the night dig through them, either to kill or steal, or commit adultery. The night favours the assault, and makes the defence the more difficult; for the good man of the house knows not what hour the thief will come, and therefore is asleep, Luke xii. 39. and he and his lie exposed: for this reason our law makes burglary, which is the breaking and entering of a dwelling-house in the night time, with a felonious intent, to be felony without benefit of clergy.

And (lastly) Job observes (and perhaps observes it as part of the present, tho' secret punishment of such sinners as these) that they are in a continual terror for fear of being discovered, ver. 17. *The morning is to them even as the shadow of death.* The light of the day, which is welcome to honest people is a terror to ill people: They curse the sun, not as the Moors, because it scorseth them, but because it discovers them. If one know them, their consciences fly in their faces, and they are ready to become their own accusers; for they are in the terrors of the shadow of death. Shame came in with sin, and everlasting shame is at the end of it. See the misery of sinners, they are exposed to continual frights, and yet their folly that they are afraid of coming under the eye of men, but have no dread of God's eye, which is always upon them; and that they are not afraid of doing that which yet they are so terribly afraid of being known to do.

18. He is swift as the waters, their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards. 19. Drought and heat consume the snow-waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. 20. The womb shall forget him, the worm shall feed sweetly on him, he shall be no more remembered, and wickedness shall be broken as a tree. 21. He evil intreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow. 22. He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life. 23. Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. 24. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone, and brought low, they are taken out of the way, as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. 25. And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?

Job here in the conclusion of his discourse,

1. Gives some further instances of the wickedness of these cruel bloody men. (1.) Some are pirates and robbers at sea. To this many learned interpreters apply those difficult expressions, ver. 18. *He is swift upon the waters.* Privateers chuse those ships that are the best sailors: in these swift ships, they cruise from one channel to another to pick up prizes; and this brings them in so much wealth that their portion is cursed in the earth, and they behold not the way of the vineyards, *i. e.* as bishop Patrick explains it, they despise the employment of those who till the ground, and plant vineyards, as poor and unprofitable. But others make this a further description of the carriage of those sinners that are afraid of the light: if they be discovered, they get away as fast as they can, and chuse to look not in the vineyards for fear of being discovered; but in some cursed portion, a lonely desolate place, which no body looks after. (2.) Some are abusive to those that are in trouble, and add affliction to the afflicted. Barrenness was looked upon as a great reproach, and those that fall under that affliction they upbraid them with it, as Peninnah did Hannah, on purpose to vex them and make them to fret, which is a barbarous thing: this is evil entreating the barren that beareth not, ver. 21. or those that

that are childless, and so want the arrows others have in their quiver, which enable them to deal with their enemy in the gate. (*Psal. cxxvii. ult.*) He takes that advantage against, and is oppressive to them: as the fatherless, so the childless are in some degree helpless: and for the same reason it is a cruel thing to hurt the widow, to whom he ought to do good. And not doing good when it is in our power, is doing hurt. (3.) There are those who by enuring themselves to cruelty, come at last to be so exceeding boisterous, that they are *the terror of the mighty in the land of the living*, ver. 22. *He draws the mighty into a snare*, with his power, even the greatest are not able to stand before him when he is in his mad fits: he riseth up in his passion, and lays about him with so much fury, that no man is sure of his life; nor can he at the same time be sure of his own, for *his hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him*, Gen. xvi. 12. One would wonder how any man can take pleasure in making all about him afraid of him, yet there are those that do.

2. He shews that these daring sinners prosper, and are at ease for a while, nay, and many times end their days in peace, as Ishmael, who tho' he was a man of such a character as is here given, yet both lived and died in the presence of all his brethren, as we are told, Gen. xvi. 12.—xxv. 18. Of these sinners here it is said, (1.) That it is *given them to be in safety*, ver. 23. They seem to be under the special protection of the divine providence; and one would wonder how they escape with life thro' so many dangers as they run themselves into. (2.) That they rest upon this, *i. e.* They rely upon this as sufficient to warrant all their violences: *because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily*, they think there is no great evil in them, and that God is not displeased with them, nor will ever call them to an account. Their prosperity is their security. (3.) That they are exalted for a while, they seem to be the favourites of heaven, and value themselves as making the best figure on earth. They are set up in honour, set up (as they think) out of the reach of danger, and lifted up in the pride of their own spirits. (4.) That at length they are carried out of the world very silently and gently, and without any remarkable disgrace or terror. "They go down to the grave as easily as snow-water sinks into the dry ground when it is melted by the sun." So bishop Patrick explains ver. 19. And to the same purpose he paraphraseth ver. 20. *The womb shall forget him, &c.* "God sets no such mark of his displeasure upon him, but that his mother may soon forget him: the hand of justice doth not hang him on a gibbet for the birds to feed on; but he is carried to his grave like other men, to be the sweet food of worms: there he lies quietly, and neither he nor his wickedness are any more remembered than a tree which is broken to shivers." And ver. 24. *They are taken out of the way as all other, i. e.* "They are shut up in their graves like all other men; nay, they die as easily (without those tedious pains which some endure) as an ear of corn is cropped with your hand." Compare this with Solomon's observation, Eccl. viii. 10. *I saw the wicked buried who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten.*

3. He foresees their fall however, and that their death, tho' they die in ease and honour, will be their ruin. God's eyes are upon their ways, ver. 23. Tho' he keep silence, and seem to connive at them, yet he takes notice, and keeps account of all their wickedness, and will make it to appear shortly, that their most secret sins which they thought *no eye should see*, (ver. 15.) were under his eye, and will be called over again. Here is no mention of the punishment of these sinners in the other world, but it is intimated in the particular notice taken of the consequents of his death. (1.) The consumption of the body in the grave, tho' common to all, yet to him is in the nature of a punishment for his sin. *The grave shall consume those that have sinned*; that land of darkness will be the lot of those that *love darkness rather than light*. The bodies they pampered shall be a feast for worms, which shall feed as sweetly on them as ever they fed on the pleasures and gains of their sins. (2.) Tho' they thought to make themselves a great name by their wealth, and power, and mighty achievements, yet *their memorial is perished with them*, *Psal. ix. 6.* He that made himself so much talked of, when he is dead, *shall be no more remembered with honour*: his name shall rot, Prov. x. 7. They that durst not give him his due character while he lived, shall not spare him when he is dead; so that the womb that bare him, his own mother shall forget him, *i. e.* shall avoid making mention of him, and shall think that the greatest kindness she can do him, since no good can be said of him. That honour which is got by sin will soon turn into shame. (3.) The wickedness they thought to establish in their families shall be broken as a tree; all their wicked projects shall be blasted, and all their wicked hopes dashed and buried with them. (4.) Their pride shall be brought down, and laid in the dust, ver. 24. and in mercy to the world they shall be taken out of the way, and all their power and prosperity shall be cut off; you may seek him, and he shall not be found. Job owns that wicked people will be miserable at last, miserable on the other side death, but utterly denies what his friends asserted, that ordinarily they are miserable in this life.

Lastly, He concludes with a bold challenge to all that were present to disprove what he had said if they could, ver. 25. *If it be not so now*, as I have opened, and if it do not from thence

follow that I am unjustly condemned and censured, let them that can, undertake to prove that my discourse is either (1.) False in itself; and then they prove me a liar; or (2.) Foreign, and nothing to the purpose, and then they prove my speech frivolous, and nothing worth. That indeed which is false is nothing worth, where there is not truth, how can there be goodness? but they that speak the words of truth and soberness, need not fear having what they say brought to the test, but can cheerfully submit it to a fair examination, as Job doth here.

C H A P. XXV.

Bildad here makes a very short reply to Job's last discourse, as one that began to be sick of the cause. He drops the main question concerning the prosperity of wicked men, as being unable to answer the proofs Job had produced in the foregoing chapter; but because he thought Job had made too bold with the divine majesty, in his appeals to the divine tribunal, chap. xxiii. he in a few words shews the infinite distance there is between God and man, teaching us (1.) To think highly and honourably of God, ver. 2, 3, 5. (2.) To think meanly of our selves, ver. 4, 6. which however misapplied to Job, are two good lessons for us all to learn.

1. **T**HEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. Dominion and fear are with him; he maketh peace in his high places. 3. Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise? 4. How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? 5. Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. 6. How much less man that is a worm: and the son of man which is a worm?

Bildad is to be commended here for two things: (1.) For speaking no more to the matter about which Job and he differed, Perhaps he began to think Job was in the right, and then it was justice to say no more to it, as one that contended for truth, not for victory, and therefore for the finding of truth would be content to lose the victory: or if he still thought himself in the right, yet he knew when he had said enough, and would not wrangle endlessly for the last word. And, it may be, was one reason why he and the rest of them let fall this debate, because they perceived that Job and they did not differ so much in opinion as they thought: they owned that wicked people might prosper a while, and Job owned they would be destroyed at last, and how little then was the difference! if disputants would understand one another better, perhaps they would find themselves nearer one another than they imagined. (2.) For speaking so well to the matter about which Job and he were agreed: If we would all get our hearts filled with awful thoughts of God, and humble thoughts of our selves, we should not be so apt as we are to fall out about matters of doubtful disputation, which are trifling or intricate.

Two ways Bildad takes here to exalt God and abase man.

1. He shews how bright and blessed and glorious God is, and from thence infers how guilty and impure man is before him, ver. 2, 3, 4. Let us see then,

(1.) What great things are here said of God, designed to possess Job with a reverence of him, and to check his reflections upon him, and upon his dealings with him.

(1.) God is the sovereign lord of all, and *with him is terrible majesty*. *Dominion and fear are with him*, ver. 2. He that gave being has an incontestible authority to give laws, and can enforce the laws he gives. He that made all, has a right to dispose of all according to his own will, with an absolute sovereignty. Whatever he will do, he doth, and may do, and none can say unto him what dost thou? or why dost thou so? *Dan. iv. 34.* His having dominion (or being *dominus*) speaks him both owner and ruler of all the creatures. They are all his, and they are all under his direction, and at his dispose. From hence it follows that he is to be feared, *i. e.* revered and obeyed, and that he is feared by all that know him; the seraphims cover their faces before him: and that first or last all will be made to fear him. *Mens dominion is oft despicable, oft despised, but God is always terrible.*

(2.) The glorious inhabitants of the upper world are all perfectly observant of him, and entirely acquiesce in his will. *He maketh peace in his high places*. He enjoys himself in a perfect tranquillity: the holy angels never quarrel with him, nor with one another, but entirely acquiesce in his will, and unanimously execute it, without murmuring or disputing: thus the will of God is done in heaven; and thus we pray it may be done by us and others on earth. The sun, moon, and stars keep their courses, and never clash with one another: Nay, even in this lower region, which is oft disturbed with storms and tempests, yet when God pleaseth he commandeth peace, by *making the storm a calm*, *Psal. cvii. 29.—lxv. 7.* Observe, the high places are his high places; for *the heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's* in a peculiar manner: peace is God's work, where it is made, it is he that makes

it, *Iſa.* lvii. 19. In heaven there is perfect peace; for there is perfect holiness, and there is God, who is love.

(3.) He is a God of irresistible power: *Is there any number of his armies?* ver. 3. The greatness and power of princes is judged of by their armies. God is not only himself almighty, but he has numberless numbers of armies at his beck and dispose; standing armies that are never disbanded; regular troops, and well disciplined, that are never to seek, never at a loss, never mutiny; veteran troops, that have been long in his service; victorious troops, that never failed of success, nor were ever foiled. All the creatures are his hosts, angels especially. He is Lord of all, Lord of hosts. He hath numberless armies, and yet maketh peace; he could make war upon us, but is willing to be at peace with us; and even the heavenly hosts were sent to proclaim peace on earth, and good will towards men, *Luke* ii. 14.

(4.) His providence extends it self to all: *Upon whom doth not his light arise?* The light of the sun is communicated to all parts of the world, and take the year round, to all equally. See *Pſal.* xix. 6. That is a faint resemblance of the universal cognizance and care God takes of the whole creation, *Mat.* v. 45. All are under the light of his knowledge, and are naked and open before him: All partake of the light of his goodness: It seems especially to be meant of that; He is good to all: The earth is full of his goodness. He is *Deus optimus*, as well as *maximus*: Has power to destroy; but his pleasure is to shew mercy. All the creatures live upon his bounty.

(2.) What ill things are here said of man, and very truly and justly, ver. 4. *How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean?* Man is not only mean, but vile, not only earthy, but filthy; he cannot be justified, he cannot be clean, (1.) In comparison with God: Man's righteousness and holiness at the best is nothing to God's, *Pſal.* lxxxix. 6. (2.) In debate with God. He that will quarrel with the word and providence of God, must unavoidably go by the worst. God will be justified, and then man will be condemned, *Pſal.* li. 4. *Rom.* iii. 4. There is no error in God's judgment, and therefore there lies no exception against it, nor appeal from it. (3.) In the sight of God. If God be so great and glorious, how can man, who is guilty and impure, appear before him? Note, 1. Man, by reason of his actual transgressions, is obnoxious to God's justice, and cannot in himself be justified before him: He can neither plead not guilty, nor plead any merit of his own to balance or extenuate his guilt. The scripture has concluded all under sin. 2. Man, by reason of his original corruption, as he is born of a woman, is odious to God's holiness, and cannot be clean in his sight: God sees his impurity, and it is certain by it he is rendered utterly unfit for communion and fellowship with God in grace here, and for the vision and fruition of him in glory hereafter. We have need therefore to be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, and to be bathed again and again in the blood of Christ, that fountain opened.

2. He shews how dark and defective even the heavenly bodies are in the sight of God, and in comparison with him; and from thence infers how little, and mean, and worthless, man is.

1. The lights of heaven, tho' beauteous creatures, are before God but as *clouds of earth*, ver. 5. Behold, even to the moon, walking in brightness, and the stars, those glorious lamps of heaven, which the heathen were so charmed with the lustre of, that they worshipped them, yet in God's sight, in comparison with him they shine not; they are not pure; they have no glory, by reason of the glory which excelleth; as a candle, tho' it burn, yet doth not shine when it is set in the clear light of the sun. Even the glory of God shining in his providences eclipseth the glory of the brightest creatures, *Iſa.* xxiv. 23. *The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion.* The heavenly bodies are often clouded; we plainly see spots in the moon, and with the help of glasses may sometimes discern spots upon the sun too: But God sees spots in them that we do not see: And how durst Job then so confidently appeal to God, who would discover that amiss in him, which he was not aware of in himself?

2. The children of men, tho' noble creatures, are before God but as *worms of the earth*, ver. 6. How much less doth man shine in honour, how much less is he pure in righteousness, *that is a worm, and the son of man*, whoever he be, *that is a worm!* A vermin; so some; not only mean and despicable, but noxious and detestable. A mite; so others; the smallest animal, which cannot be discerned with the naked eye, but thro' a magnifying-glass: Such a thing is man. (1.) So mean and little, and inconsiderable, in comparison with God, and with the holy angels: So worthless and despicable, having his original in corruption, and hastning to corruption. What little reason has man then to be proud, and what great reason to be humble? (2.) So weak and impotent, and so easily crushed, and therefore a very unequal match for Almighty God. Shall man be such a fool to contend with his Maker, who can tread him to pieces easier than we can a worm? (3.) So dirty and filthy: Man is not pure, for he is a worm, hatched in putrefaction, and therefore odious to God. Let us therefore wonder at God's condescension, in taking such worms as we are into covenant and communion with himself, especially at the condescension of the Son of God, in emptying himself so far as to say, *I am a worm, and no man*, *Pſal.* xxii. 6.

C H A P. XXVI.

This is Job's short reply to Bildad's short discourse, in which he is so far from contradicting him, that he confirms what he had said, and out-does him in magnifying God; and setting forth his power, to shew what reason he had still to say as he did, chap. xiii. 2. What ye know, the same do I know also. (1.) He shews that Bildad's discourse was foreign to the matter he was discoursing of: Tho' very true and good, yet not to the purpose, ver. 2—4. (2.) That it was needless to the person he was discoursing with; for he knew it, and believed it, and could speak of it as well as he, and better, and could add to the proofs which he had produced of God's power and greatness, which he doth in the rest of his discourse, ver. 5—13. concluding that when they had both said what they could, all came short of the merit of the subject, and it was still far from being exhausted, ver. 14.

1. **B**UT Job answered and said, 2. How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? 3. How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing, as it is? 4. To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?

One would not have thought that Job, now he was in so much pain and misery, should banter his friend as he doth here, and make himself merry with the impertinency of his discourse. Bildad thought he had made a fine speech, that the matter was so weighty, and the language so fine, that he had gained the reputation both of an oracle and of an orator; but Job peevishly enough shews that his performance was not so valuable as he thought it, and ridicules him for it. He shews,

1. That there was no great matter to be found in it, ver. 3. *How hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?* This is spoken ironically, upbraiding Bildad with the good conceit he himself had of what he had said. (1.) He thought he had spoken very clearly, had declared the thing as it is. He was very fond (as we are all apt to be) of his own notions, and thought they only were right and true, and intelligible, and all other notions of the thing were false, mistaken, and confused; whereas when we speak of the glory of God, we cannot declare the thing as it is; for we see it thro' a glass darkly, or but by reflection, and shall not see him as he is, till we come to heaven: Here we cannot order our speech concerning him, *Job* xxxvii. 19. (2.) He thought he had spoken very fully, tho' in few words, that he had plentifully declared it, and alas it was but poorly and scantily that he declared it, in comparison with the vast compass and copiousness of the subject.

2. That there was no great use to be made of it; *Cui bono?* What good hast thou done by all that thou hast said? ver. 2. *How hast thou with all this mighty flourish helped him that is without power?* ver. 3. *How hast thou with thy grave dictates counselled him that hath no wisdom?* Job would convince him (1.) That he had done God no service by it, nor made him in the least beholden to him. It is indeed our duty, and will be our honour to speak on God's behalf, but we must not think that he needs our service, or is indebted to us for it, nor will he accept it, if it come from a spirit of contention and contradiction, and not from a sincere regard to God's glory. (2.) That he had done his cause no service by it. He thought his friends were mightily beholden to him, for helping them at a dead lift, to make their part good against Job, when they were quite at a loss, and had no strength, no wisdom. Even weak disputants, when warm, are apt to think truth more beholden to them than really it is. (3.) That he had done him no service by it. He pretended to convince, instruct, and comfort Job, but alas, what he had said was so little to the purpose, that it would not avail to rectify any mistakes, nor to assist him either in bearing his afflictions, or in getting good by them, ver. 4. *To whom hast thou uttered words?* Was it to me that thou didst direct thy discourse? and dost thou take me for such a child as to need these instructions? Or dost thou think them proper for one in my condition? Every thing that is true and good, is not suitable and seasonable. To one that was humbled, and broken, and grieved in spirit, as Job was, he ought to preach of the grace and mercy of God, rather than of his greatness and majesty, to lay before him the consolations rather than the terrors of the Almighty. Christ knows how to speak what is proper for the weary, *Iſa.* l. 4. and his ministers should learn rightly to divide the word of truth, and not make those sad whom God would not have made sad; as Bildad did; and therefore Job asks him, *whose spirit came from thee?* i. e. What troubled soul would ever be revived and relieved, and brought to it self by such discourses as these? Thus are we often disappointed in our expectations from our friends that should comfort us, but the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, never mistakes in his operations, nor misleth of his end.

5. Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof. 6. Hell is naked before him, and

and destruction hath no covering. 7. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth, upon nothing. 8. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them. 9. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. 10. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. 11. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. 12. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. 13. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. 14. Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

The truth received a great deal of light from the dispute between Job and his friends, concerning those points about which they differed; but now they are upon a head in which they were all agreed, the infinite glory and power of God. How doth truth triumph, and how bright doth it shine, when there appears no other strife between the contenders, but which shall speak most highly and honourably of God, and be most large in shewing forth his praise? It were well if all disputes about matters of religion, might end thus, in glorifying God as Lord of all, and our Lord, with one mind and one mouth, Rom. xv. 6. for to that we have all attained, in that we are all agreed. 1. Many illustrious instances are here given, of the wisdom and power of God, in the creation and preservation of the world.

1. If we look about us, to the earth and waters here below, we shall see mighty instances of omnipotence, which we may gather up out of these verses.

(1.) *He hangs the earth upon nothing*, ver. 7. The vast terraqueous globe, neither rests upon any pillars, nor hangs upon any axle-tree, and yet by the almighty power of God, is firmly fixed in his place, poised with its own weight. The art of man could not hang a feather upon nothing, yet the divine wisdom hangs the whole earth so. It is *ponderibus librata suis*, so saith the poet, it is *upheld by the word of God's power*, so saith the apostle. What is hung upon nothing, may serve us to set our feet on, and bear the weight of our bodies; but it will never serve us to set our hearts on, nor bear the weight of our souls.

(2.) *He sets bounds to the waters of the sea*, and compasseth them in, ver. 10. that they may not return to cover the earth, and these bounds shall continue unmoved, unshaken, unworn, till the day and night come to an end, when time shall be no more. Herein appears the dominion which providence hath over the raging waters of the sea, and so it is an instance of his power, Jer. v. 22. And the care which providence takes of the poor sinful inhabitants of the earth, who, tho' obnoxious to his justice, and lying at his mercy, are thus preserved from being overwhelmed, as they were once by the waters of a flood, and will continue to be so, because they are reserved unto fire.

(3.) *He forms dead things under the waters*: Rephaim, giants are formed under the waters, i. e. Vast creatures of prodigious bulk, as whales, giant-like creatures, among the innumerable inhabitants of the water. So bishop Patrick.

(4.) By mighty storms and tempests he shakes the mountains, which are here called *the pillars of heaven*, ver. 11. and even divideth the sea, and smiteth through its proud waves, ver. 12. At the presence of the Lord, the sea flies, and the mountains skip, Psal. cxiv. 3, 4. See Hab. iii. 6, &c. A storm furrows the waters, and doth as it were divide them; and then a calm smites through the waves, and lays them flat again. See Psal. lxxxix. 9, 10. Those who think Job lived at, or after, the time of Moses, apply this to the dividing of the Red-sea before the children of Israel, and the drowning of the Egyptians in it: By his understanding he smiteth thro' Rahab, so the word is, and Rahab is often put for Egypt; as Psal. lxxxvii. 4. Isa. li. 9.

2. If we consider hell beneath, tho' it is out of our sight, yet we may conceive the instances of God's power there. By hell and destruction, ver. 6. we may understand not only the grave, and those that are buried in it, that they are under the eye of God, tho' laid out of our sight, which may strengthen our belief of the resurrection of the dead. God knows where to find, and whence to fetch all the scattered atoms of the consumed body: But we may take it as meant also of the place of the damned, where the separate souls of the wicked are in misery and torment. That is hell and destruction, which are said to be before the Lord, Prov. xv. 11. and here to be naked before him, to which it is probable there is an allusion, Rev. xiv. 10. where sinners are said to be tormented in the presence of the holy angels (who attended the Shechinah) and in the presence of the Lamb. And this may give light to, ver. 5. which some antient versions read thus; (and I think more agreeable to the signification of the word Rephaim) Behold the giants groan under the waters, and those that dwell with them; and then follows, Hell is naked before him, typified by the drowning of the giants of the old world; so the learned Mr Joseph Mede understands it, and with it illustrates Prov. xxi. 16. where hell is called the congregation of the dead; and it is the same word

which is here used, and which he would there have rendred the congregation of the giants, in allusion to the drowning of the sinners of the old world. And is there any thing in which the majesty of God appears more dreadful, than in the eternal ruin of the ungodly, and the groans of the inhabitants of the land of darkness? Those that will not with angels, fear and worship, shall for ever with devils fear and tremble, and God therein will be glorified.

3. If we look up to heaven above, we shall see instances of God's sovereignty and power.

1. *He stretcheth out the north over the empty place*, ver. 7. So he did at first, then *he stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain*, Psal. civ. 2. and still continues to keep them stretched out, and will do so, till the general conflagration, when they shall be rolled together as a scroll, Rev. vi. 14. He instanceth in the north, because his country (as ours) lay in the northern hemisphere; and the air is the empty place over which it is stretched out. See Psal. lxxxix. 12. What an empty place is this world, in comparison with the other!

2. He keeps the waters that are said to be above the firmament, from pouring down upon the earth, as once they did, ver. 8. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, as if they were tied close in a bag, till there is occasion to use them; and notwithstanding the mighty weight of water, so raised and laid up, yet the cloud is not rent under them, for then they would burst, and pour out as a spout, but they do, as it were, distil through the cloud, and so come drop by drop, in mercy, to the earth, in small rain, or great rain, as he pleaseth.

3. He conceals the glory of the upper world, the dazzling lustre of which we poor mortals could not bear, ver. 9. He holds back the face of his throne, that light in which he dwells, and spreads a cloud upon it, through which he judgeth, chap. xxii. 13. God will have us to live by faith, not by sense, for that is agreeable to a state of probation: It were not a fair trial, if the face of God's throne were as visible now, as it will be in the great day.

*Left his high throne, above expression bright,
With deadly glory should oppress our sight;
To break the dazzling force, he draws a screen,
Of sable shades, and spreads his clouds between.*

Sir R. Blackmore.

4. The bright ornaments of heaven are the work of his hands, ver. 13. By his Spirit, the eternal Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters, the breath of his mouth, Psal. xxxiii. 6. He hath garnished the heavens, not only made them, but beautified them; has curiously bespangled them with stars by night, and painted them with the light of the sun by day. God having made man to look upward, (*Os homini sublime dedit*) has therefore garnished the heavens to invite him to look upwards, that by pleasing his eye with the dazzling light of the sun, and the sparkling light of the stars, their number, order, and various magnitudes, which as so many golden studs beautify the canopy which is drawn over our heads, he may be led to admire the great Creator, the Father and Fountain of lights, and to consider, if the pavement be so richly inlaid, what is the palace! If the visible heavens be so glorious, what are those that are out of sight! From the beauteous garniture of the anti-chamber, we may infer the precious furniture of the presence-chamber. If stars be so bright, what are angels! What is meant here by the crooked serpent, which his hands have formed, is not certain: Some make it part of the garnishing of the heavens, the milky-way, say some; some particular constellation, so called, say others: It is the same word that is used for leviathan, Isa. xxvii. 1. and probably may be meant of the whale or crocodile, in which appears much of the power of the Creator; and why may not Job conclude with that inference, when God himself doth so? chap. xli.—2. He concludes at last with an awful & cetera, ver. 14. Lo, these are parts of his ways, the out-goings of his wisdom and power, the ways in which he walks, and by which he makes himself known to the children of men. Here (1.) He acknowledgeth with adoration the discoveries that were made of God. These things which he himself had said, and which Bildad had said are his ways, and this is heard of him; this is something of God. But (2.) He admires the depth of that which is undiscovered. This that we have said, is but part of his ways, a small part: What we know of God, is nothing in comparison with what is in God, and what God is: After all the discoveries which God has made to us, and all the inquiries we have made after God, still we are much in the dark concerning him, and must conclude, Lo, these are but parts of his ways. Something we hear of him by his works, and by his word; but alas! how little a portion is heard of him! Heard by us, heard from us; we know but in part, we prophesy but in part. When we have said all we can, concerning God, we must even do as St Paul doth, Rom. xi. 33. despairing to find the bottom, sit down at the brink, and adore the depth: O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! It is but a little portion that we hear and know of God in our present state. He is infinite and incomprehensible; our understandings and capacities are weak and shallow, and the full discoveries of the divine glory are reserved for the future state. Even the thunder of his power, i. e. his powerful thunder, one of the lowest of his ways, here in our

our own region, we cannot understand. See chap. xxxvii. 4, 5. Much less can we understand the utmost force and extent of his power, the terrible efforts and operations of it, and particularly the power of his anger, Psal. xc. 11. God is great, and we know him not.

C H A P. XXVII.

Job had sometimes complained of his friends, that they were so eager in disputing, that they would scarce let him put in a word; suffer me that I may speak: and O that you would hold your peace! But now it seems they were out of breath, and left him room to say what he would; either they were themselves convinced that Job was in the right, or they despaired of convincing him that he was in the wrong; and therefore they threw down the cudgels, and gave up the cause: Job was too hard for them, and forced them to quit the field; for great is the truth and will prevail. What Job had said, chap. xxvi. was a sufficient answer to Bildad's discourse: and now Job paused a while, to see whether Zophar would take his turn again; but declining it, Job himself went on, and without any interruption or vexation given him, said all he desired to say in this matter. (1.) He begins with a solemn protestation of his integrity, and of his resolution to hold it fast, ver. 2—6. (2.) He expresseth the dread he had of that hypocrisy which they charged him with, ver. 7—10. (3.) He shews the miserable end of wicked people, notwithstanding their long prosperity, and the cause that attends them, and is entailed upon their families, ver. 11—23.

1. **M**oreover, Job continued his parable and said, 2. As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; 3. All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; 4. My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. 5. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. 6. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.

Job's discourse here, is called a parable, (*Mashal*) the title of Solomon's proverbs, because it was grave and weighty, and very instructive; and he spake as one having authority: it comes from a word that signifies to rule, or have dominion, and some think it intimates that Job now triumphed over his opponents, and spake as one that had baffled them. We say of an excellent preacher, that he doth *dominari in concionibus*, he commands his hearers. Job did so here.

A long strife there had been between Job and his friends, they seemed disposed to have the matter compromised; and therefore since an oath for confirmation is an end of strife, Heb. vi. 10. Job here backs all he had said in maintenance of his own integrity with a solemn oath, to silence contradiction, and take the blame entirely upon himself if he did prevaricate. Observe,

1. The form of his oath, ver. 2. As God liveth who hath taken away my judgment. Here, (1.) He speaks highly of God, in calling him the living God, which means everliving, the eternal God, that has life in himself; and in appealing to him as the sole and sovereign Judge: we can swear by no greater, and it is an affront to him to swear by any other. (2.) Yet he speaks hardly of him, and unbecomingly, in saying that he had taken away his judgment, i. e. denied to do him justice in this controversy, and to appear in defence of him, and by continuing his troubles, on which his friends grounded their censures of him, had taken from him the opportunity he hoped ere now to have had of clearing himself. Elihu reproved him for this word, chap. xxxiv. 3. for God is righteous in all his ways, and takes away no man's judgment. But see how apt we are to despair of favour, if it be not shewed us presently; so short spirited are we, and so soon weary of waiting God's time. He also chargeth it upon God, that he had vexed his soul; had not only not appeared for him, but had appeared against him, and by laying such grievous afflictions upon him, had quite embittered his life to him, and all the comforts of it; we, by our impatience, vex our own souls, and then complain of God that he has vexed them. Yet see Job's confidence in the goodness, both of his cause and of his God; that tho' God seemed to be angry with him, and to act against him for the present, yet he could cheerfully commit his cause to him.

2. The matter of his oath, ver. 3, 4. (1.) That he would not speak wickedness, nor utter deceit. That in general, he would never allow himself in the way of lying, that as in this debate, he had all along spoke as he thought, so he would never wrong his conscience, by speaking otherwise: he would never maintain any doctrine, nor assert any matter of fact but what he believed to be true; nor would he deny the truth, how much soever it might make against him: and whereas his friends charged him with being an hypocrite, he was ready to answer upon oath to all their interrogatories, if called to it. On the one hand,

he would not for all the world deny the charge, if he knew himself guilty; but would declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and take to himself the shame of his hypocrisy: on the other hand, since he was conscious to himself of his integrity, and that he was not such a man as his friends represented him, he would never betray his integrity, nor charge himself with that which he was innocent of; he would not be brought, no not by the rack of their unjust censures; falsely to accuse himself. If we must not bear false witness against our neighbour, then not against ourselves. (2.) That he would stick to this resolution, as long as he lived, ver. 3. All the while my breath is in me. Our resolutions against sin should be thus constant; resolutions for life: in things doubtful and indifferent, it is not safe to be thus peremptory; we know not what reason we may see to change our mind, God may reveal even that unto us which now we are not aware of; but in so plain a thing as this, we cannot be too positive, that we will never speak wickedness. Something of a reason for his resolution is here implied, that our breath will not be always in us; we must shortly breathe our last, and therefore while our breath is in us, we must never breathe wickedness and deceit, nor allow ourselves to say or do any thing which will make against us, when our breath shall depart. The breath in us is called the spirit of God, because he breathed it into us; and that is another reason why we must not speak wickedness. It is God that gives us life and breath, and therefore while we have breath we must praise him.

3. The explication of his oath, ver. 5, 6. God forbid that I should justify you in your uncharitable censures of me, by owning my self an hypocrite: no, until I die, I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. (1.) He would always be an honest man, would hold fast his integrity, and not curse God, as Satan by his wife urged him to do, chap. ii. 9. Job here thinks of dying, and of getting ready for death, and therefore resolves never to part with his religion, tho' he had left all he had in the world. Note, The best preparative for death, is perseverance to death in our integrity. Until I die, i. e. tho' I die by this affliction, I will not thereby be put out of conceit with my God and my religion. Tho' he slay me, yet I will trust in him. (2.) He would always stand to it, that he was an honest man; he would not remove, he would not part with the conscience, and comfort, and credit of his integrity; he was resolved to defend it to the last: God knows, and my own heart knows, that I always meant well, and did not allow my self in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of any known sin; this is my rejoicing, and no man shall rob me of it; I will never lye against my right, It has often been the lot of upright men to be censured and condemned as hypocrites; but it well becomes them to bear up boldly against such censures, and not to be discouraged by them, or think the worse of themselves for them; as the apostle, Heb. xiii. 18. We have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly. *Hic murus abeneus est, nil conscire sibi.* Job complained much of the reproaches of his friends; but (saith he) my heart shall not reproach me. i. e. I will never give my heart cause to reproach me, but will keep conscience void of offence; and while I do so, I will not give my heart leave to reproach me: who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. To resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us when we give them cause to do so, is to affront God, whose deputy conscience is, and to wrong ourselves; for it is a good thing when a man hath sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. But to resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, while we still hold fast our integrity, is to baffle the designs of the evil spirit, who tempts good Christians to question their adoption: if thou be the son of God; and to concur with the operations of the good Spirit, who witnesseth to their adoption.

7. Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me, as the unrighteous. 8. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? 9. Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?

Job having solemnly protested the satisfaction he had in his integrity, for the further clearing of himself, here expresseth the dread he had of being found an hypocrite.

1. He tells us how he startled at the thought of it, for he looked upon the condition of an hypocrite, and a wicked man, to be certainly the most miserable condition that any man could be in, ver. 7. Let mine enemy be as the wicked: a proverbial expression, like that Dan. iv. 19. The dream be to them that hate thee. Job was so far from indulging himself in any wicked way, and flattering himself in it, that if he might have leave to wish the greatest evil he could think of to the worst enemy he had in the world, he would wish him the portion of a wicked man, knowing that worse he could not wish him. Not that we may lawfully wish any man to be wicked, or that any man who is not wicked, should be treated as wicked; but we should all choose to be in the condition

condition of a beggar, an out-law, a galley-slave, any thing, rather than in the condition of the wicked, tho' in never so much pomp and outward prosperity.

2. He gives us the reasons of it.

1. Because the hypocrite's hope will not be crowned, *ver. 8. For what is the hope of the hypocrite?* Bildad had condemned it, *chap. viii. 13, 14.* and Zophar, *chap. xi. 20.* and Job here concurs with them, and reads the death of the hypocrite's hope with as much assurance as they had done; and this fitly comes in as a reason, why he would not remove his integrity, but still hold it fast. Note, The consideration of the miserable condition of wicked people, and especially hypocrites, should engage us to be upright, for we are undone, for ever undone, if we be not; and also to get the comfortable evidence of our uprightness; for how can we be easy, if the great concern lie at uncertainties? Job's friends would persuade him, that all his hope was but the hope of the hypocrite, *chap. iv. 6.* Nay, saith he, I would not for all the world be so foolish as to build upon such a rotten foundation; for *what is the hope of the hypocrite?* See here, (1.) The hypocrite deceived. He hath gained, and he hath hope; this is his bright side; it is allowed that he hath gained by his hypocrisy, has gained the praise and applause of men, and the wealth of this world. Jehu gained a kingdom by his hypocrisy, and the Pharisees many a widow's house: Upon this gain he builds his hopes, such as it is; he hopes he is in good circumstances for another world, because he finds he is so for this, and he blesteth himself in his own way. (2.) The hypocrite undeceived, he will at last see himself wretchedly cheated: For, (1.) God shall take away his soul, fore against his will, *Luke xii. 20. Thy soul shall be required of thee:* God, as the Judge, takes it away, to be tried and determined to its everlasting state: He shall then fall into the hands of the living God, to be dealt with immediately. (2.) What will his hope be then! It will be vanity and a lie, it will stand him in no stead. The wealth of this world, which he hoped in, he must leave behind him, *Psal. xlix. 17.* The happiness of the other world, which he hoped for, he will certainly miss of; he hoped to go to heaven, but he will be shamefully disappointed; he will plead his external profession, privileges, and performances, but all his pleas will be over-ruled as frivolous, *Depart from me, I know you not.* So that upon the whole matter, it is certain, a formal hypocrite, with all his gains, and all his hopes, will be certainly miserable in a dying hour.

2. Because the hypocrite's prayer will not be heard, *ver. 9. Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?* No, he will not, it cannot be expected he should. If true repentance come upon him, God will hear his cry, and accept him, *Isa. i. 18.* But if he continue impenitent and unchanged, let him not think to find favour with God. Observe, (1.) *Trouble will come upon him,* certainly it will: Troubles in the world often surprize those that are most secure of an uninterrupted prosperity: However, death will come, and trouble with it, when he must leave the world, and all his delights in it: The judgment of the great day will come; fearfulness will surprize the hypocrites, *Isa. xxxiii. 14.* (2.) Then he will cry to God; will pray, and pray earnestly. Those that in prosperity slight God, either prayed not at all, or were cold and careless in prayer, when trouble comes, will make their application to him, and cry as men in earnest. But (3.) *Will God hear him then?* In the troubles of this life? God hath told us, that he will not hear the prayers of those that regard iniquity in their hearts, *Psal. lxvi. 18.* and set up their idols there, *Ezek. xiv. 4.* nor of those that turn away their ear from hearing the law, *Prov. xxviii. 9. Get you to the gods whom you have served,* *Judg. x. 24.* In the judgment to come, it is certain God will not hear the cry of those that lived and died in their hypocrisy. Their doleful lamentations will all be unpitied: *I will laugh at your calamity.* Their importunate petitions will all be thrown out, and their pleas rejected: Inflexible justice cannot be biased, nor the irreversible sentence revoked. See *Mat. vii. 22, 23. Luke xiii. 26.* and the case of the foolish virgins, *Mat. xxv. 11.*

3. Because the hypocrite's religion is neither comfortable nor constant, *ver. 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty?* No, not at any time, for his delight is in the profits of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, more than in God; especially not in time of trouble: *Will he always call upon God?* No, in prosperity he will not call upon God, but slight him; in adversity he will not call upon God, but curse him; he is weary of his religion, when he gets nothing by it, or is in danger of losing. Note, 1. Those are hypocrites, who, tho' they profess religion, neither take pleasure in it, nor persevere in it; that reckon their religion a task and a drudgery, a weariness, and snuff at it; that make use of it only to serve a turn, and lay it aside when the turn is served; that will call upon God while it is in fashion, or while the pang of devotion lasts; but give it off when they fall into other company, or when the hot fit is over. 2. The reason why hypocrites do not persevere in religion, is because they have no pleasure in it. They that do not delight themselves in the Almighty, will not always call upon him. The more comfort we find in our religion, the more close we shall cleave to it: Those that have no delight in God, are easily inveigled by the pleasures of sense, and so drawn away from their religion; and they are easily run down by the crosses of this life, and so driven away from their religion, and will not always call upon God.

11. I will teach you by the hand of God: *that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal.* 12. Behold, all ye your selves have seen it, why then are ye thus altogether vain? 13. This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, *which they shall receive of the Almighty.* 14. If his children be multiplied, *it is for the sword:* and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. 15. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep. 16. Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; 17. He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. 18. He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth *that the keeper maketh.* 19. The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not. 20. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. 21. The east-wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place. 22. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand. 23. Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

Job's friends had seen a great deal of the misery and destruction that attends wicked people, especially oppressors; and Job, while the heat of disputation lasted, had said as much, and with as much assurance of their prosperity; but now the heat of the battle was pretty well over, he was willing to own how far he agreed with them, and where the difference between his opinion and theirs lay. (1.) He agreed with them, that wicked people are miserable people; that God will certainly reckon with cruel oppressors, and one time or other, one way or other, his justice will make reprisals upon them, for all the affronts they have put upon God, and all the wrongs they have done to their neighbours. This truth is abundantly confirmed by the entire concurrence even of these angry disputants in it. But (2.) In this they differed, they held that these deserved judgments are presently and visibly brought upon wicked oppressors, that *they travel with pain all their days;* that in prosperity *the destroyer comes upon them;* that *they shall not be rich;* nor their branch green, and that *their destruction shall be accomplished before their time;* so Eliphaz, *chap. xv. 20, 21, 29, 32.* that *the steps of their strength shall be streightened;* that *terrors shall make them afraid on every side;* so Bildad, *chap. xviii. 7, 11.* That he himself *shall vomit up his riches,* and that *in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits;* so Zophar, *chap. xx. 15, 22.* Now Job held that many times judgments do not fall upon them quickly, but are deferred for some time: That vengeance strikes slowly he had already shewed, *chap. xxi. and xxiv.* now he comes to shew that it strikes surely and severely, and that reprieves are no pardons.

1. Job here undertakes to set this matter in a true light, *ver. 11, 12. I will teach you:* And we must not disdain to learn even from those that are sick and poor, yea, and peevish too, if they deliver what is true and good. Observe (1.) What he would teach them; *That which is with the Almighty, i. e. the counsels and purposes of God concerning wicked people, which are hid with him, and which you cannot hastily judge of:* And the usual methods of his providence concerning them: This (saith Job) *will I not conceal:* What God has not concealed from us, we must not conceal from those we are concerned to teach: *Things revealed belong to us and our children.* (2.) How he would teach them, *by the hand of God, i. e. by his strength and assistance.* Those that undertake to teach others, must look to the hand of God to direct them, to open their ear, (*Isa. l. 4.*) and to open their lips. Those whom God teacheth with a strong hand are best able to teach others, *Isa. viii. 11.* (3.) What reason they had to learn those things which he was about to teach them, *ver. 12.* That it was confirmed by their own observation, *you your selves have seen it;* but what we have heard, and seen, and known, we have need to be taught, that we may be perfect in our lesson; and that it would set them to rights in their judgment concerning him; *Why then are ye thus altogether vain,* to condemn me for a wicked man, because I am afflicted? Truth rightly understood and applied, would cure us of that vanity of mind which ariseth from our mistakes.

That particularly which he offers now to lay before them, is *the portion of a wicked man with God, particularly of oppressors,* *ver. 13.* compare *chap. xx. 29.* Their portion in the world may be wealth and preferment, but their portion with God is ruin and misery. They are above the control of any earthly power, it may be, but the Almighty can deal with them.

2. He doth it, by shewing that wicked people may in some instances prosper, but ruin follows them in those very instances, and that is their portion, that is their heritage, that it is which they must abide by.

1. They may prosper in their children, but ruin attends them. *His children perhaps are multiplied,* *ver. 14.* or magnified; so some, they are very numerous, and are raised to honour and great estates. Worldly people are said to be *full of children,* *Psal. xvii. 14.* and as it is in the margin there, *their children are full.* In them

them the parents hope to live, and in their preferment to be honoured. But the more children they leave, and the greater prosperity they leave them in, the more and the fairer marks do they leave for the arrows of God's judgments to be levelled at: His three sore judgments, *sword, famine, and pestilence*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. (1.) Some of them shall die by the sword, the sword of war perhaps; they brought them up to live by their sword, as Esau, chap. xxvii. 40. and those that do so, commonly die by the sword, first or last: Or by the sword of justice for their crimes, or the sword of the murderer for their estates. (2.) Others of them shall die by famine, ver. 14. *His offspring shall not be satisfied with bread*: He thought he had secured to them large estates, but it may happen that they may be reduced to poverty, so as not to have the necessary supports of life, at least not to live comfortably. They shall be so needy, that they shall not have a competency of necessary food, and so greedy, or so discontented, that what they have they shall not be satisfied with, because not so much, or not so dainty as what they have been used to. *Ye eat, but ye have not enough*, Hag. i. 6. (3.) Those that remain shall be buried in death, i. e. shall die of the plague, which is called death, Rev. vi. 8. and be buried privately and in haste, as soon as they are dead, without any solemnity; *buried with the burial of an ass*; and even their widows shall not weep; they shall not have wherewithal to put them in mourning. Or it notes, That these wicked men, as they live undesired, so they die unlamented, and even their widows will think themselves happy that they are got rid of them.

2. They may prosper in their estates, but ruin attends them too, ver. 16, 17, 18. (1.) We will suppose them to be rich in money and plate, in clothing and furniture: *They heap up silver in abundance as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay*: They have heaps of clothes about them, as plentiful as heaps of clay; or it intimates that they have such abundance of clothes, that they are even a burthen to them: *They lade themselves with thick clay*, Hab. ii. 6. See what is the care and business of worldly people to heap up worldly wealth. Much would have more; until the silver is cankered, and the garments moth-eaten, *Jam. v. 2, 3*. But what comes of it? He shall never be the better for it himself; death will strip him, death will rob him, if he be not robbed and stripped sooner, *Luke xii. 20*. Nay, God will so order it, that the just shall wear his raiment, and the innocent shall divide his silver. (1.) They shall have it; and divide it among themselves; some way or other providence shall so order it, that good men shall come honestly by that wealth which the wicked man came dishonestly by. *The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, Prov. xiii. 22. God disposeth of mens estates as he pleaseth, and often makes their wills against their wills. The just whom he hated and persecuted, shall have rule over all his labour, and in due time recover with interest what was violently taken from him. The Egyptians jewels were the Israelites pay. Solomon observes, *Ecc. ii. 26*. that God makes the sinners drudges to the righteous; for to the sinner he gives travel to gather and heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. (2.) They shall do good with it, the innocent shall not hoard the silver, as he did that gathered it, but shall divide it to the poor; shall give a portion to seven, and also to eight, which is laying up the best securities. Money is like muck, good for nothing if it be not spread. When God enricheth good men, they must remember they are but stewards, and must give an account. What bad men bring a curse upon their families with the ill-getting of, good men bring a blessing upon their families with the well using of. *He that by unjust gain increaseth his substance, shall gather it for him that will pity the poor*, Prov. xxviii. 8. (2.) We will suppose them to have built them strong and stately houses; but they are like the house which the moth makes for her self in an old garment, out of which she will soon be shaken, ver. 18. He is very secure in it, as a moth, and has no apprehension of danger, but it will prove of as short continuance as a booth which the keeper makes, which will quickly be taken down and gone, and his place shall know him no more.

3. Destruction attends their persons, tho' they lived long in health, and at ease, ver. 19. *The rich man shall lie down to sleep, to repose himself in the abundance of his wealth, Soul, take thine ease*; shall lie down in it as his strong city, and seem to others to be very happy, and very easy; but he shall not be gathered, i. e. he shall not have his mind composed and settled, and gathered in to enjoy his wealth. He doth not sleep so contentedly as people think he doth: He lies down, but his abundance will not suffer him to sleep, at least not so sweetly as the labouring man, *Ecc. v. 12*. He lies down, but he is full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, and then he opens his eyes, and he is not, he sees himself and all he has hastning away, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye. His cares increase his fears, and both together make him uneasy. So that when we attend him to his bed, we do not find him happy there: But in the close we are called to attend his exit, and see how miserable he is in death, and after death.

1. He is miserable in death: It is to him the king of terrors, ver. 20, 21. When some mortal disease seizeth him, what a fright is he in? *Terrors take hold on him, as waters*, as if he were surrounded by the flowing tides. He trembles to think of leaving this world, and much more of removing to another. This mingles sorrow and wrath with his sickness, as Solomon observes, *Ecc. v. 17*. These terrors put him either (1.) Into a silent and No. xxxvii.

fullen despair, and then the tempest of God's wrath, the tempest of death, may be said to steal him away in the night, when no one is aware, or takes any notice of it. Or, (2.) Into an open and clamorous despair, and then he is said to be carried away, and hurled out of his place, as with a storm, and with an east-wind, violent and noisy, and very dreadful. Death to a godly man is like a fair gale of wind to transport him to the heavenly country, but to a wicked man it is like an east-wind, a storm, a tempest, that hurries him away in confusion and amazement to destruction.

2. He is miserable after death.

1. His soul falls under the just indignation of God, and the terror of that puts him into such amazement at the approach of death, ver. 22. *For God shall cast upon him, and not spare*. While he lived he had the benefit of sparing mercy, but now the day of God's patience is over, and he will not spare, but pour out upon him the full vials of his wrath. What God casts down upon a man, there is no flying from, nor bearing up under. We read of his casting down great stones from heaven upon the Canaanites, *Josh. x. 11*. which made terrible execution among them; but what was that to his casting down his anger in its full weight upon the sinner's conscience, like the talent of lead, *Zech. v. 7, 8*. The damned sinner seeing the wrath of God break in upon him, would fain flee out of his hand, but he cannot, the gates of hell are locked and barred, and the great gulph fixed, and it will be in vain to call for the shelter of rocks and mountains. Those that will not be persuaded now to fly to the arms of divine grace, which are stretched out to receive them, will not be able to flee from the arms of divine wrath, which will shortly be stretched out to destroy them.

2. His memory falls under the just indignation of all mankind, ver. 23. *Men shall clap their hands at him, i. e. they shall rejoice in the judgments of God, by which he is cut off, and be well pleased in his fall. When the wicked perish, there is shouting*, Prov. xi. 10. When God buries him, men shall hiss him out of his place, and leave on his name perpetual marks of infamy. In the same place where he has been caressed and cried up, he shall be laughed at, *Psal. lii. 7*. and his ashes shall be trampled on.

CHAP. XXVIII.

The strain of this chapter is very unlike the rest of this book: Job forgets his sores, and all his sorrows, and talks like a philosopher, or a virtuoso: Here is a great deal, both of natural philosophy and moral in this discourse; but the question is how it comes in here. Doubtless it was not merely for an amusement, or diversion from the controversy, and if it had been only so, perhaps it had not been much amiss. When disputes grow hot, better lose the question, than lose our temper. But this is pertinent, and to the business in hand. Job and his friends had been discoursing about the dispensations of providence towards the wicked and the righteous. Job had shewed that some wicked men live and die in prosperity, while others are presently and openly arrested by the judgments of God: But if any ask the reason why some are punished in this world, and not others, they must be told it is a question that cannot be resolved. The knowledge of the reasons of state in God's government of the world is kept from us, and we must neither pretend to it, nor reach after it. Zophar had wished that God would shew Job the secrets of wisdom, chap. xi. 6. No, saith Job, secret things belong not to us, but things revealed, Deut. xxix. 29. And here he shews, (1.) Concerning worldly wealth, how industriously that is sought for, and pursued by the children of men, what pains they take, what contrivances they have, and what hazards they run to get it, ver. 1—11. (2.) Concerning wisdom, ver. 12. In general, the price of it is very great; it is of inestimable value, ver. 15—19. The place of it is very secret, ver. 14, 20, 22. In particular, there is a wisdom which is hid in God, ver. 23—27. And there is a wisdom which is revealed to the children of men, ver. 28. Our enquiries into the former must be checked, into the latter must be quickened, for that is it which is our concern.

1. **S**URELY there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they find it. 2. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone. 3. He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. 4. The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot; they are dried up, they are gone away from men. 5. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. 6. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold. 7. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vultures eye hath not seen. 8. The lions whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. 9. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. 10. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. 11. He bindeth the floods from overflowing,

flowing, and the thing that is hid, bringeth he forth to light.

Here Job shews (1.) What a great way the wit of man may go, in diving into the depths of nature, and seizing the riches of it, what a great deal of knowledge, and a great deal of wealth men may by their ingenious and industrious searches make themselves masters of. But doth it therefore follow that men may by their wit comprehend the reasons why some wicked people prosper, and others are punished, why some good people prosper, and others are afflicted? No, by no means: The caverns of the earth may be discovered, but not the councils of heaven. (2.) What a great deal of care and pains worldly men take to get riches. He had observed concerning the wicked man, chap. xxvii. 16. that he *heaped up silver as the dust*; now here he shews whence that silver came, and how it was come by, which he is so fond of, to shew what little reason wicked rich men have to be proud of their wealth and pomp. Observe here,

1. The wealth of this world is hid in the earth. Thence the silver and the gold which afterwards they refine is fetched, ver. 1. There it lay mixed with a great deal of dirt and dross, like a worthless thing, of no more account than common earth, and abundance of it will so lie neglected, till the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up. Holy Mr Herbert, in his poem called *Avarice*, takes notice of this, to shame men out of the love of money.

*Money, thou bane of blifs, thou source of wo,
Whence com'st thou that thou art so fresh and fine?
I know thy parentage is base and low;
Man found thee poor and dirty in a mine.*

*Surely thou didst so little contribute
To this great kingdom which thou now hast got,
That he was fain, when thou wast destitute,
To dig thee out of thy dark cave and grot, &c.*

*Man calleth thee his wealth who made thee rich,
And while he digs out thee, falls in the ditch.*

Iron and brass, tho' less valuable, but more serviceable metals, are taken out of the earth, ver. 2. and are there found in great abundance, which abates their price indeed, but is a great kindness to man, who could much better be without gold than without iron. Nay, out of the earth comes bread, i. e. Bread-corn, the necessary supports of life, ver. 5. Thence man's maintenance is fetched, to mind him of his own original, he is of the earth, and is hastning to the earth. Under it is turned up, as it were fire, precious stones that sparkle as fire; brimstone, that is apt to take fire; coal, that is proper to feed fire. As we have our food, so we have our fuel cut out of the earth: There the sapphires and other gems are, and thence gold dust is digged up, ver. 6. The wisdom of the Creator has placed these things (1.) Out of our sight, to teach us not to set our eyes upon them, Prov. xxiii. 5. (2.) Under our feet, to teach us not to lay them in our bosoms, nor to set our hearts upon them, but to trample upon them with a holy contempt. See how full the earth is of God's riches, Psal. civ. 24. and infer from thence not only how great a God he is, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, Psal. xxiv. 1. but how full heaven must needs be of God's riches, which is the city of the great king, in comparison with which this earth is a poor country.

2. The wealth that is hid in the earth cannot be come at, but with a great deal of difficulty. It is hard to be found out, there is but here and there a vein for the silver, ver. 1. The precious stones, tho' bright themselves, yet because buried in obscurity, and out of sight, are called *stones of darkness, and the shadow of death*. Men may search long before they light on them; when found out, it is hard to be fetched out; men's wits must be set on work to contrive ways and means to get this hid treasure into their hands, they must with their lamps set an end to darkness; and if one expedient miscarry, one method fail, they must try another, till they have searched out all perfection, and turned every stone to effect it, ver. 3. They must grapple with subterraneous waters, ver. 4, 10, 11. and force their way thro' rocks which are, as it were, the roots of the mountains, ver. 9. Now God has made the getting of gold and silver, and precious stones so difficult, (1.) For the exciting and engaging of industry. *Dii laboribus omnia vendunt*. If valuable things were too easily come by, men would never learn to take pains: But the difficulty of gaining the riches of this earth, may suggest to us what violence the kingdom of heaven suffers. (2.) For the checking and restraining of pomp and luxury. What is for necessity is had with a little labour from the surface of the earth, but what is for ornament must be digged with a great deal of pains out of the bowels of it. To be fed is cheap, but to be fine is chargeable.

3. Tho' the subterraneous wealth is thus hard to come by, yet men will have it. He that loveth silver is not satisfied with silver, and yet is not satisfied without it, but they that have much, must needs have more. See here (1.) What inventions men have to get this wealth: They search out all perfection, ver. 3. They have arts and engines to dry up the waters, and carry them off when they break in upon them in their mines, and threaten to

drown the work, ver. 4. They have pumps and pipes, and canals to clear their way, and obstacles being removed, they tread the path which no fowl knoweth, ver. 7, 8. Unseen by the vulture's eye, which is piercing and quick-sighted, and untrodden by the lion's whelps, that traverse all the paths of the wilderness. (2.) What pains men take, and what vast charge they are at to get this wealth, they work their way thro' the rocks, and undermine the mountains, ver. 10. (3.) What hazards they run: They that dig in the mines have their lives in their hands; for they are fain to bind the floods from overflowing, ver. 11. and are continually in danger of being suffocated by damps, or crushed or buried alive by the fall of the earth upon them. See how foolish man adds to his own burthen; he is sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his face: But as if that were not enough, he will get gold and silver in the peril of his life; tho' the more is gotten, the less valuable it is; for in Solomon's time silver was as stones. But (4.) Observe what it is that carries men thro' all this toil and peril; their eye sees every precious thing, ver. 10. Silver and gold are precious things with them, and they have them in their eye in all these pursuits, they fancy they see them glittering before their faces, and in the prospect of laying hold on them, they make nothing of all these difficulties; for (lastly) they make something of it at last, that which is hid bringeth he forth to light, ver. 11. What was hid under ground is laid upon the bank; the metal that was hid in the ore, is refined from its dross, and brought forth pure out of the furnace, and then he thinks his pains well bestowed. Go to the miners then, thou sluggard in religion, consider their ways, and be wise. Let their courage, diligence, and constancy in seeking the wealth that perisheth, shame us out of slothfulness and faint-heartedness in labouring for the true riches. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? much easier, much safer, yet gold is sought for, but grace neglected. Will the hopes of precious things out of the earth, (so they call them, tho' really they are paltry and perishing) be such a spur to industry, and shall not the certain prospect of truly precious things in heaven be much more so?

12. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? 13. Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. 14. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. 15. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. 16. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. 17. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. 18. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. 19. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

Job having spoken of the wealth of the world, which men put such a value upon, and take so much pains for, here comes to speak of another more valuable jewel, and that is wisdom and understanding, the knowing and enjoying of God and our selves. They that found out all those ways and means to enrich themselves, thought themselves very wise: but Job will not own that to be wisdom; he supposeth them to gain their point, and to bring to light what they sought for, ver. 11. and yet asks, *where is wisdom?* for it is not here; this their way is their folly: We must therefore seek it somewhere else, and it will be found no where but in the principles and practices of religion. There is more true knowledge, satisfaction, and happiness, in sound divinity which shews us the way to the joys of heaven, than in natural philosophy or mathematicks which help us to find a way into the bowels of the earth.

Two things cannot be found out concerning this wisdom.

1. The price of it, for that is inestimable, its worth infinitely more than all the riches in this world. *Man knows not the price thereof*, ver. 13. i. e. (1.) Few put a due value upon it. Men know not the worth of it, its innate excellency, their need of it, and of what unspeakable advantage it will be to them; and therefore tho' they have many a price in their hand to get this wisdom, yet they have no heart to it, Prov. xvii. 16. The cock in the fable knew not the value of the precious stone he found in the dunghil, and therefore would rather have light on a barley-corn. Men know not the worth of grace, and therefore will take no pains to get it. (2.) None can possibly give a valuable consideration for it, with all the wealth this world can furnish them with. This Job is large upon, ver. 15, &c. where he makes an inventory of the *Bona Notabilia*, the most valuable treasures of this world, gold is five times mentioned, silver comes in also, and then divers precious stones, the onyx and sapphire, pearls and rubies, and the topaz of Ethiopia, these are the things that are highest prized in the world's markets: but if a man would give, not only these, heaps of these, but all the substance of his house, all he is worth in the world for wisdom, it would utterly be condemned: these may give a man some advantage in seeking wisdom as they did to Solomon, but there is no purchasing wisdom with

with these. It is a gift of the *holy Ghost*, which cannot be bought with money, Acts viii. 20. As it doth not run in the blood, and so come to us by descent, so it cannot be got for money; nor doth it come to us by purchase. Spiritual gifts are conferred without money, and without price, because no money can be a price for them. Wisdom is likewise a more valuable gift to him that has it, makes him richer and happier than gold or precious stones. It is *better to get wisdom than gold*. Gold is another's, wisdom our own; gold is for the body and time, wisdom is for the soul and eternity. Let that which is most precious in God's account, be so in ours. See Prov. iii. 14, &c.

2. The place of it, for that is undiscoverable. *Where shall wisdom be found?* ver. 12. He asks this,

1. As one that truly desired to find it. This is a question we should all put, while the most of men are asking where shall money be found, we should ask where may wisdom be found, that we may seek it and find it. Not vain philosophy, or carnal policy, but true religion, for that is the only true wisdom, that is it which best improves our faculties, and best secures our spiritual and eternal welfare. This is that which we should cry after, and dig for, Prov. ii. 3; 4.

2. As one that utterly despaired of finding it any where but in God, and any way, but by divine revelation. *It is not found in this land of the living*, ver. 13. We cannot attain to a right understanding of God and his will, of our selves and our duty and interest by reading any books or men, but God's book, and the men of God. Such is the degeneracy of the human nature, that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those that are born again; and thro' grace partake of a divine nature. As for others, even the most ingenious and industrious, they can tell us no tidings of this lost wisdom. (1.) Ask the miners, and by them *the depth will say, it is not in me*, ver. 14. Those that dig into the bowels of the earth, to rifle the treasures there, cannot in these dark recesses find this rare jewel; nor with all their art make themselves masters of it. (2.) Ask the mariners, and by them the sea will say, *it is not in me*: it can never be got either by trading on the waters, or diving into them; can never be *sucked from the abundance of the seas, or the treasures hid in the sand*. Where there is a vein for the silver, there is no vein for wisdom none for grace. Men can easier break thro' the difficulties they meet with in getting worldly wealth, than thro' those they meet with in getting heavenly wisdom: and they will take more pains to learn how to live in this world, than how to live for ever in a better world. So blind and foolish is man become, that it is in vain to ask him, *where is the place of wisdom?* and which is the road that leads to it?

20. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? 21. Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. 22. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. 23. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. 24. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. 25. To make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure. 26. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: 27. Then did he see it, and declare it, he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. 28. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

The same question he had asked, ver. 12. he asks again here, for it is too worthy, too weighty, to be let fall, until we speed in the enquiry. Concerning this we must seek until we find, until we get some satisfactory account of it. And by a diligent prosecution of this enquiry, he brings it at length to this issue: that there is a twofold wisdom; one *hid in God*; which is secret, and *belongs not to us*; the other made known by him, and revealed to man, which *belongs to us and to our children*.

1. The knowledge of God's *secret will*, the will of his providence is out of our reach, and what God has reserved to himself. *It belongs to the Lord our God*. To know the particulars of what God will do hereafter, and the reasons of what he is doing now is the knowledge he first speaks of.

(1.) This knowledge is hid from us: it is high, we cannot attain unto it, ver. 21, 22. *It is hid from the eyes of all living*, even of philosophers, politicians, and saints; it is *kept close from the fowls of the air*, tho' they fly high, and in the open firmament of heaven, tho' they seem somewhat nearer that upper world where the source of this wisdom is, tho' their eyes behold afar off, Job xxxix. 29. yet they cannot penetrate into the counsels of God: No, man is *wiser than the fowls of heaven*, and yet comes short of this wisdom. Even those who in their speculations soar highest, and think themselves like the fowls of the air, above the heads of other people, yet cannot pretend to this knowledge. Job and his friends had been arguing about the methods and reasons of the dispensations of providence in the government

of the world: why, what fools are we (saith Job) to fight in the dark thus? to dispute about that which we do not understand? the line and plummet of human reason can never fathom the abyss of the divine counsels. Who can undertake to give a rationale of providence, or account for the maxims, measure, and methods of God's government, those *arcana imperii*, the cabinet councils of divine wisdom? let us then be content not to know the future events of providence, until time discover them, Acts i. 7. and not to know the secret reasons of providence until eternity discover them. God is now a God that hideth himself, Isa. xlv. 15. *clouds and darkness are round about him*. Tho' this wisdom be hid from all living, yet *destruction and death say they have heard the fame of it*: tho' they cannot give an account of it themselves, for there is *no wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge at all in the grave*, much less this; yet there is a world on the other side death and the grave, on which those dark regions border, and to which we must pass thro' them, and there we shall see clearly what we are now in the dark about. Have a little patience, saith death to the inquisitive soul, I will fetch thee shortly to a place where even this wisdom will be found: when *the mystery of God shall be finished*, it will be laid open, and we shall know how we are known, when the veil of flesh is rent, and the interposing clouds are scattered, we shall know what God doth, tho' we know not now, John xiii. 7.

(2.) This knowledge is hid in God, as the apostle speaks. Eph. iii. 9. *Known unto God are all his works*, tho' they are not known to us, Acts xv. 18. There are good reasons for what he doth, tho' we cannot assign them, ver. 23. *God understands the way thereof*. Men sometimes do they know not what, but God never doth. Men do what they did not design to do; new occurrences put them upon new counsels, and oblige them to take new measures: but God doth all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself, and which he never alters. Men sometimes do that which they cannot give a good reason for, but in every will of God there is a council; he knows both what he doth, and why he doth it; the whole series of events, and the order and place of every occurrence. This knowledge he has in perfection, but keeps to himself.

Two reasons are here given why God must needs understand his own way, and he only:

1. Because all events are now directed by an *all-seeing and almighty providence*, ver. 24, 25. He that governs the world, is (1.) Omniscient: *for he looks to the ends of the earth*, both in place and time: distant ages, distant regions are under his view. We do not understand our own way, much less can we understand God's way, because we are short-sighted; how little do we know of what is a doing in the world, much less of what will be done? but *the eyes of the Lord are in every place*; nay, they *run to and fro thro' the earth*: nothing is or can be hid from him; and therefore the reasons why some wicked people prosper remarkably, and others are remarkably punished in this world, which are secret to us, are known to him. One day's events, and one man's affairs, have such a reference to, and such a dependence upon, another's, that he only to whom all events and all affairs are naked and open, and who sees the whole at one entire and certain view, is a competent judge of every part. (2.) He is omnipotent: He can do every thing, and is very exact in all he doth. For proof of this, he instanceth in the winds and waters, ver. 25. What is lighter than the wind? yet God hath ways of poisoning it; he knows how to *make the weight for the winds*, which he *brings out of his treasures*, Psal. cxxxv. 7. keeping a very particular account of what he draws out, as men do of what they pay out of their treasures, not at random, as men bring out of their trash. Nothing sensible is to us more unaccountable than the wind; we *hear the sound of it, yet cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes*: but God gives it out by weight, wisely ordering both from what point it shall blow, and with what strength. The waters of the sea, and the rain-waters he both weighs and measures; allotting the proportion of every tide, and every shower. A great and constant communication there is between clouds and seas, the waters above the firmament, and those under it, vapours go up, rains come down, air is condensed into water, water rarified into air: but the great God keeps an exact account of all the stock with which this trade is carried on for the publick benefit, and sees that none of it be lost. Now if in these things providence be so exact, much more in dispensing frowns and favours, rewards and punishments to the children of men, according to the rules of equity.

2. Because all events were from eternity designed and determined by an infallible prescience, and immutable decree, ver. 26, 27. When he settled the course of nature, he fore-ordained all the operations of his government.

1. He settled the course of nature; for this he instanceth in *a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunder and lightning*: the general manner and method, and the particular uses and tendencies of these strange performances, both their causes and their effects were appointed by the divine purpose; hence he is said to *prepare lightnings for the rain*, Psal. cxxxv. 7. Jer. x. 13.

2. When he did that, he laid all the measures of his providence, and drew an exact scheme of the whole work from first to last: then from eternity did he see in himself, and declare to himself the plan of his proceedings; then he prepared it, fixed it and

and established it, set every thing in readiness for all his works; so that when any thing was to be done, nothing was to seek, nor could any thing unforeseen occur to put it either out of its method, or out of its time, for all was ordered as exactly as if he had studied it, and searched it out; so that whatever he doth, *nothing can be put to it, or taken from it, and therefore it shall be for ever*, Eccles. iii. 14. Some make Job to speak of wisdom here as a person, and translate it, *then he saw her, and shewed her*, &c. and then it is parallel with that of Solomon, concerning the essential wisdom of the Father, the eternal Word, Prov. viii. 22, &c. Before the earth was, then was I by him, John i. 1, 2.

2. The knowledge of God's revealed will, the will of his precept, and this is within our reach, it is level to our capacity, and will do us good, ver. 28. *Unto man he said, behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*. Let it not be said, that when God concealed his counsels from man, and forbade him that tree of knowledge, it was because he grudged him any thing that would contribute to his real bliss and satisfaction; no, he let him know as much as he was concerned to know in order to his duty and happiness; he shall be entrusted with as much of his sovereign mind, as was needful and fit for a subject, but he must not think himself fit to be a privy-counsellor. He said to Adam, so some, to the first man, in the day in which he was created; he told him plainly, it was not for him to amuse himself with over-curious searches into the mysteries of creation, nor to pretend to solve all the phaenomena of nature; he would find it neither possible nor profitable to do so: No less wisdom (saith archbishop Tillotson) than that which made the world, can thoroughly understand the philosophy of it: but let him look upon this as his wisdom, to fear the Lord and to depart from evil; let him learn that, and he is learned enough, let this knowledge serve his turn. When God forbade man the tree of knowledge, he allowed him the tree of life, and this is that tree, Prov. iii. 18. We cannot attain true wisdom, but by divine revelation, *the Lord giveth wisdom*, Prov. ii. 6. Now the matter of that is not the secrets of nature or providence, but the rules of our own practice: unto man he said, not go up to heaven to fetch happiness thence; or go down to the deep to draw it up thence: No, *the word is nigh thee*, Deut. xxx. ii. *He hath shewed thee, O man*, not what is great, but what is good, not what the Lord thy God designs to do with thee, but what he requires of thee, Mic. vi. 8. *Unto you, O men, I call*, Prov. viii. 4. Lord, what is man that he should be thus minded, thus visited! Behold, mark, take notice of this, he that hath ears let him hear what the God of heaven saith to the children of men, *the fear of the Lord that is the wisdom*. Here is (1.) The description of true religion, pure religion, and undefiled; it is to *fear the Lord, and depart from evil*, which agrees with God's character of Job, chap. i. 1. *The fear of the Lord is the spring and summary of all religion*. There is a slavish fear of God, springing from hard thoughts of him, which is contrary to religion, Mat. xxv. 24. There is a selfish fear of God, springing from dreadful thoughts of him, which may be a good step towards religion, Acts ix. 5. But there is a filial fear of God, springing from great and high thoughts of him, which is the life and soul of all religion. And wherever this reigns in the heart, it will appear by a constant care to *depart from evil*, Prov. xvi. 6. This is essential to religion, we must first cease to do evil, or we shall never learn to do well. *Virtus est vitium fugere*. (2.) The commendation of religion; it is wisdom and understanding; to be truly religious, is to be truly wise: as the wisdom of God appears in the institution of it; so the wisdom of man appears in the practice and observance of it: it is understanding, for it is the best knowledge of truth; it is wisdom, for it is the best conduct of our affairs: nothing more surely guides our way, and gains our end, than being religious.

C H A P. XXIX.

After that excellent discourse concerning wisdom, in the foregoing chapter, Job sat down and paused a while, not because he had talked himself out of breath, but because he would not, without the leave of the company, engross the talk to himself, but would give room for his friends, if they pleased, to make their remarks on what he had said; but they had nothing to say, and therefore after he had recollected himself a little, he went on with his discourse, concerning his own affairs, in this and the two following chapters. In which (1.) He describes the height of the prosperity from which he was fallen. And (2.) The depth of the adversity into which he was fallen; and this he doth to move the pity of his friends, and to justify, or at least excuse, his own complaints. But then, (3.) To obviate his friends censures of him, he makes a very ample and particular protestation of his own integrity, notwithstanding. In this chapter, he looks back to the days of his prosperity: and shews, (1.) What comfort and satisfaction he had in his house and family, ver. 1—6. (2.) What a great deal of honour and power he had in his country, and what respect was paid him by all sorts of people, ver. 7—10. (3.) What abundance of good he did in his place, as a magistrate, ver. 11—17. (4.) What a just prospect he had of the continuance of his comfort at home, ver. 18—20. And of his interest abroad, ver. 21—25. All this he enlargeth upon, to aggravate his present calamities; like Naomi, I went out full, but am brought home again empty.

1. **M**OREOVER, Job continued his parable, and said, 2. Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me: 3. When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness: 4. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle: 5. When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me: 6. When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oyl:

Losers may have leave to speak; and there is nothing they speak of more feelingly, than of the comforts they are stripped of: Their former prosperity is one of the most pleasing subjects of their thoughts and talk. It was so to Job here, who begins with a wish, ver. 2. *O that I were as in months past!* So he brings in this account of his prosperity. His wish is (1.) *O that I were in as good a state as I was then; that I had as much wealth, honour, and pleasure, as I had then!* This he wisheth, not so much from a concern he had for his ease, as for his reputation, and the glory of his God, which he thought was eclipsed by his present sufferings. *O! that I might be restored to my prosperity, and then the censures and reproaches of my friends would be effectually silenced, even upon their own principles, and for ever rolled away.* If this be our end in desiring life, health, and prosperity, that God may be glorified, and the credit of our holy profession rescued, preserved, and advanced, the desire is not only natural but spiritual. (2.) *O that I were in as good a frame of spirit, as I was then!* That which Job complained most of now, was a load upon his spirits, through God's withdrawing from him; and therefore he wishes he had now his spirit as much enlarged and encouraged in the service of God as he had had then, and that he had as much freedom and fellowship with him, as he then thought himself happy in. This was in the days of his youth, ver. 4. when he was in the prime of his time for the enjoyment of those things, and could relish them with the highest gust. Note, Those that prosper in the days of their youth, know not what black and cloudy days they are yet reserved for.

Two things made the months past pleasant to Job.

1. That he had comfort in his God. This was the chief thing he rejoiced in, in his prosperity, as the spring of it, and the sweetness of it; that he had the favour of God, and the tokens of that favour. He did not attribute his prosperity to a happy turn of fortune, or to his own might, or the power of his own hand, but makes the same acknowledgment that David doth, *Psal. xxx. 7. Thou, by thy favour, hast made my mountain stand strong*. A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world.

Four things were then very pleasant to holy Job.

(1.) The confidence he had in the divine protection. They were the days when God preserved me, ver. 2. Even then he saw himself exposed, and did not make his wealth his strong city, nor trusted in the abundance of his riches, but the name of the Lord was his strong tower, and in that only he thought himself safe, and to that he ascribed it that he was then safe, and his comforts were preserved to him. The devil saw a hedge about him of God's making, Job i. 10. and Job saw it himself, and owned it was *God's visitation that preserved his spirit*, chap. x. 12. Those only whom God protects are safe, and may be secure; and therefore those who have never so much of this world, must not think themselves safe, unless God preserve them.

(2.) The complacency he had in the divine favour, ver. 3. *God's candle shined upon his head*, i. e. God lifted up the light of his countenance upon him, gave him the assurances, and sweet relishes of his love: The best of the communications of the divine favour to the saints in this world, is but the candle-light, compared with what is reserved for them in the future state. But such abundant satisfaction did Job take in the divine favour, that by the light of that he walked through darkness; that guided him in his doubts, comforted him in his griefs, bore him up under his burthens, and helped him through all his difficulties. Those that have the brightest sun-shine of outward prosperity, must yet expect some moments of darkness; they are sometimes crossed, sometimes at a loss, sometimes melancholy, but they that are interested in the favour of God, and know how to value it, can, by the light of that, walk cheerfully and comfortably through all the darkness of this vale of tears. That puts gladness into the heart, enough to balance all the grievances of this present time.

(3.) The communion he had with the divine word, ver. 4. *The secret of God was upon my tabernacle*, i. e. When God conversed freely with him, as one bosom friend with another: He knew God's mind, and was not in the dark about it, as of late he had been. *The secret of the Lord is said to be with them that fear him*, for he shews them that in his covenant which others see not, *Psal. xxv. 14*. God communicates his favour and grace to his people, and receives the returns of their devotion, in a way secret to the world. Some read it, when the society of God was in my tabernacle; which Rabbi Solomon understands of an assembly of God's people, that used to meet at Job's house for religious worship, in which he presided; this he took a great deal of pleasure in, and the scattering of it was a trouble to him: Or it may be understood

understood of the angels of God pitching their tents about his habitation.

(4.) The assurance he had of the divine presence, *ver. 5. The Almighty was yet with me.* Now he thought God was departed from him, but in those days he was *with him*, and that was all in all to him. God's presence with a man in his house, tho' it be but a cottage, makes it both a castle and a palace.

2. That he had comfort in his family, every thing was agreeable there: he had both mouths for his meat, and meat for his mouths; the want of either is a great affliction. (1.) He had a numerous offspring to enjoy his estate: *my children were about me.* He had many children, enough to compass him round, and they were obedient of him, and obsequious to him, they were about him to know what he would have, and wherein they might serve him: it is a comfort to tender parents to see their children about them; Job speaks very feelingly of this comfort, now he was deprived of it: he thought it an instance of God's being with him, that his children were about him; and yet we reckon wrong, if when we have lost our children, we cannot comfort our selves with this, that we have not lost our God. (2.) He had a plentiful estate for the support of this numerous family, *ver. 6. His dairy abounded to that degree, that he might, if he pleased, wash his steps with butter;* and his olive-yards were so fruitful, beyond expectation, that it seemed as if the *rock poured him out rivers of oil:* he reckons his wealth, not by his silver and gold, which were for hoarding, but by his butter and oil, which were for use: for what is an estate good for, unless we take the good of it our selves, and do good with it to others.

7. When I went out to the gate, through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street. 8. The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and aged arose, and stood up. 9. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. 10. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. 11. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: 12. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. 13. The blessing of him that was ready to perish, came upon me: and I caused the widows heart to sing for joy. 14. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. 15. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. 16. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not, I searched out. 17. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and pluckt the spoil out of his teeth.

We have here Job in a post of honour and power; tho' he had comfort enough in his own house, yet he did not confine himself to that; we are not born for ourselves, but for the publick: when any business was to be done in the gate, the place of judgment, Job went out to it thro' the city, *ver. 7.* not in an affectation of pomp, but in an affection to justice. Observe, Judgment was administered in the gate, in the street, in the places of concourse, to which every man might have a free access; that who would might be a witness to all that was said and done; and that when judgment was given against the guilty, others might hear and fear.

Job being a prince, a judge, a magistrate, a man in authority, among the children of the east, we are here told,

1. What a great deal of respect was paid him by all sorts of people, not only for the dignity of his place, but for his personal merit, his eminent prudence, integrity, and good management. (1.) The people honoured him, and stood in awe of him. *ver. 8.* The gravity and majesty of his looks and mien, and his known strictness in animadverting upon every thing that was evil and indecent, commanded all about him into a due decorum. The young men that could not keep their countenances, or it may be were conscious to themselves of something amiss, hid themselves, and got out of his way; and the aged, tho' they kept their ground, yet would not keep their seats, they arose and stood up to do obeisance to him: they who expected honours from others, gave honour to him. Virtue and piety challenge respect from all, and ordinarily have it; but they that not only are good, but do good, are worthy of double honour. Modesty becomes those that are young and in subjection, as much as majesty becomes those that are aged and in power. Honour and fear are due to magistrates, and must be rendered to them, *Rom. xiii. 7.* But if a great and good man was thus revered, how is the great and good God to be feared! (2.) The princes and nobles paid a mighty deference to him, *ver. 9, 10.* Some think these were inferior magistrates under him, and the respect they paid him was due to his place, as their sovereign and supreme; it should rather seem they were his equals in place, and joined in commission with him, and the peculiar honour they gave him, was gained by his extraordinary abilities and services; it was agreed that he excelled them all in quickness of apprehension, soundness

of judgment, closeness of application, clearness and copiousness of expression, and therefore he was among his fellows an oracle of law, and counsel, and justice, and what he said all attended to and acquiesced in. When he came into court, especially when he stood up to speak to any business, *the princes refrained talking, the nobles held their peace,* that they might the more diligently hearken to what he said, and might be sure to take his meaning. They that had been forward to speak their own thoughts, loved to hear themselves talk, and cared not much what any body else said; yet when it came to Job's turn to speak, were as desirous to know his thoughts, as ever they had been to vent their own. They that suspected their own judgment were satisfied in his, and admired with what dexterity he split the hair, and untied the knots which puzzled them, and which they know not what to make of. When the princes and nobles wrangled among themselves, all agreed to refer the matters in dispute to Job, and to abide by his judgment: happy the men that are blessed with such eminent gifts as these, they have great opportunities of honouring God, and doing good, but have great need to watch against pride; happy the people that are blessed with such eminent men; it is a token for good to them.

2. What a great deal of good he did in his place: he was very serviceable to his country with the power he had; and here we shall see what it was which Job valued himself by in the day of his prosperity: it is natural to men to have some value for themselves, and we may judge something of our own character, by observing what that is upon which we value ourselves. Job valued himself not by the honour of his family, the great estate he had, his large income, his full table, the many servants he had at his command, the ensigns of his dignity, his equipage and retinue, the splendid entertainments he gave, and the court that was made to him, but by his usefulness. Goodness is God's glory, and it will be ours; be merciful as God is, and we are perfect as he is.

1. He valued himself by the interest he had in the esteem, affections, and prayers, of sober people; not by the studied panegyrics of the wits and poets, but the natural praises of all about him. All that heard what he said, and saw what he did, how he laid out himself for the publick good, with all the authority and tender affection of a father to his country, blessed him, and gave witness to him, *ver. 11.* Many a good word they said of him, and many a good prayer they put up for him: he did not think it an honour to make every body fear him, *Oderint dum metuant;* nor to be arbitrary, and to have his own will and way, not caring what people said of him, but, like Mordecai, to be *accepted of the multitude of his brethren,* *Esth. x. 3.* He did not so much value the applauses of those at a distance, as the attestations of those that were the witnesses of his conduct, that constantly attended him, saw him, and heard him, and could speak of their own knowledge; especially theirs who had themselves been the better for him, and could speak by their own experience, such was the blessing of him that was ready to perish, *ver. 13.* and who by Job's means was rescued from perishing. Let great men, and men of estates thus do good, and they shall have praise of the same; and let those who have good done them, look upon it as a just debt they owe to their protectors and benefactors, to bless them and give witness to them; to use their interest on earth for their honour, and in heaven for their comfort, to praise them, and pray for them. Those are ungrateful indeed, who grudge these small returns.

2. He valued himself by the care he took of those that were least able to help themselves, the poor and the needy, the widows and fatherless, the blind and lame, who could not be supposed either to merit his favour, or ever to be in a capacity to recompense it. (1.) If the poor were injured or oppressed, they might cry to Job, and if he found the allegations of their petitions true, they had not only his ear, and his bowels, but his hand too; he delivered the poor that cried, *ver. 12.* and would not suffer them to be trampled upon and run down. Nay, *ver. 16.* he was *a father to the poor,* not only a judge to protect them, and to see that they were not wronged, but a father to provide for them, and to see that they did not want, to counsel and direct them, and to appear and act for them upon all occasions. It is no disparagement to the son of a prince, to be a father to the poor. (2.) The fatherless that had none to help them, found Job ready to help them, and, if they were in straits, to deliver them. He helped them to make the best of what little they had, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them out into the world, helped them into business, helped them to it, and helped them in it; thus should the fatherless be helped. (3.) Those that were ready to perish, he saved from perishing, relieving them that were hungry, and ready to perish for want, taking care of them that were sick, that were outcasts, that were falsely accused, or in danger of being turned out of their estates unjustly, or upon any other account, were ready to perish: and the extremity of the peril, as it quickened Job to appear the more vigorously for them, so it made his seasonable kindness the more affecting, and the more obliging, and brought their blessings the more abundantly upon him. (4.) The widows that were sighing for grief, and trembling for fear, he made to sing for joy; so carefully did he protect them, and provide for them,

them, and so heartily did he espouse their interest: it is a pleasure to a good man, and should be so to a great man, to give those occasion to rejoice, who are most acquainted with grief. (5.) Those that were, upon any account, at a loss, Job gave suitable and seasonable relief to; *ver. 15. I was eyes to the blind*, counselling and advising those for the best that knew not what to do; and feet to the lame, assisting those with money and friends, that knew what they should do, but knew not how to compass it: those we best help whom we help out in that very thing wherein they are defective, and most need help: we may come to be blind or lame ourselves, and therefore should pity and succour those that are so, *Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. Heb. xii. 13.*

3. He valued himself by the conscience he made of justice and equity in all his proceedings; his friends had unjustly censured him as an oppressor; so far from that (saith he) that I always made it my business to maintain and support right. (1.) He devoted himself to the administration of justice, *ver. 14. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me*, i. e. He had an habitual disposition to execute justice, and put on a fixed resolution to do it. It was the girdle of his loins, *Isa. xi. 5.* It kept him tight and steady in all his motions: he always appeared in it, as in his clothing, and never without it. They that put on righteousness it will clothe them, it will keep them warm, and be comfortable to themselves; it will keep them safe, and fence them against the injuries of the season, it will adorn them and recommend them to the favour both of God and man. (2.) He took pleasure in it, as I may say, a holy pride: he looked upon it as his greatest glory to do justice to all, and injury to none. My judgment was a robe and a diadem. Perhaps he did not himself wear a robe and a diadem, he was very indifferent to those ensigns of honour; they were most fond of them that had least intrinsic worth to recommend them; but the settled principles of justice, by which he was governed, and did govern, were to him instead of all those ornaments. If a magistrate do the duty of his place, that is an honour to him far beyond his gold or purple, and should be accordingly his delight; and truly if he do not make conscience of his duty, and in some measure answer the end of his elevation, his robe and diadem, his gown and cap, his sword and mace, are but a reproach, like the purple robe and crown of thorns with which the Jews studied to ridicule our Saviour: for as clothes on a dead man will never make him warm, so robes on an ill man will never make him honourable. (3.) He took pains in the business of his place, *ver. 16. The cause which I knew not, I searched out.* He diligently enquired into the matters of fact, patiently and impartially heard both sides, set every thing in its true light, and cleared it from false colours; he laid all circumstances together, that he might find out the truth, and the merits of every cause, and then, and not until then, gave judgment upon it; he never answered a matter before he heard it, nor did he judge a man to be righteous, however he seemed, for his being *first in his own cause*, *Prov. xviii. 17.*

4. He valued himself by the check he gave to the violence of proud and evil men, *ver. 17. I brake the jaws of the wicked*; he doth not say he broke their necks, he did not take away their lives, but he broke their jaws; he took away their power of doing mischief, he humbled them, mortified them, and curbed their insolence, and so plucked the spoil out of their teeth; delivered the persons and estates of honest men from being made a prey of by them; when they had got the spoil between their teeth, and were greedily swallowing it down, he bravely rescued it, as David did the lamb out of the mouth of the lion, not fearing, tho' they roared and raged like a lion disappointed of his prey. Good magistrates must thus be a terror and restraint to evil doers, and a protection to the innocent, and in order to this, they have need to arm themselves with zeal and resolution, and an undaunted courage: a judge upon the bench has as much need to be bold and brave, as a commander in the field.

18. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. 19. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. 20. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. 21. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. 22. After my words they spake not again, and my speech dropped upon them. 23. And they waited for me, as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide, as for the latter rain. 24. If I laughed on them, they believed it not, and the light of my countenance they cast not down. 25. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.

That which crowned Job's prosperity was the pleasing prospect he had of the continuance of it: tho' he knew in the general, he was liable to trouble, and therefore was not secure, *chap. iii. 26. I was not in safety, neither had I rest*, yet he had no particular occasion for fear, but as much reason as ever any man had, to count upon the lengthning out of his tranquillity.

1. See here what his thoughts were in his prosperity, *ver. 18. Then I said, I shall die in my nest.* Having made himself a warm and easy nest, he hoped nothing would disturb him in it; nor move him out of it, until death removed him. He knew he had never stolen any coal from the altar which might fire his nest: he saw no storm arising to shake down his nest, and therefore concluded, that to morrow shall be as this day; as David, *Psal. xxx. 6. My mountains stand strong, and shall not be moved.* Observe, (1.) In the midst of his prosperity he thought of dying, and the thought was not uneasy to him. He knew tho' his nest was high, it did not set him out of the reach of the darts of death. (2.) Yet he flattered himself with vain hopes, (1.) That he should live long, should multiply his days as the sand. He means as the sand on the sea-shore: whereas we should rather reckon our days by the sand in the hour-glass, which will be run out in a little time. See how apt even good people are to think of death as a thing at a distance, and to put far from them that evil day, which will really be to them a good day. (2.) That he should die in the same prosperous state in which he had lived. If such an expectation as this arise from a lively faith in the providence and promise of God, it is well, but if from a conceit of our own wisdom, and the stability of these earthly things it is ill grounded, and turns into sin. We hope Job's confidence was like David's, *Psal. xxvii. 1. Whom shall I fear?* not like the rich fool's, *Luke xii. 19. Soul, take thine ease.*

2. See what was the ground of these thoughts.

1. If he looked at home he found he had a good bottom. His stock was all his own, and none of all his neighbours had a demand upon him: he found no bodily distemper growing upon him, his estate did not lie under any incumbrance, nor was he sensible of any worm at the root of it. He was getting forward in his affairs, and not going behind hand; he lost no reputation, but gained rather; he knew no rival that threatened either to eclipse his honour, or abridge his power: see how he describes this, *ver. 19, 20.* He was like a tree whose root is not only spread out, which fixeth it and keeps it firm, so that it is in no danger of being overturned, but spread out by the waters which feed it, and make it fruitful and flourishing, so that it is in no danger of withering. And as he thought himself blessed with the fatness of the earth, so also with the kind influences of heaven too; for the dew lay all night upon his branch: providence favoured him, and made all his enjoyments comfortable, and all his enterprises successful. Let none think to support their prosperity with what they draw from this earth, without that blessing which is derived from above. God's favour being continued to Job, in the virtue of that his glory was still fresh in him: those about him had still something new to say in his praise, and needed not to repeat the old stories: and it is only by constant goodness that mens glory is thus preserved fresh, and kept from withering and growing stale. His bow also was renewed in his hand, i. e. his power to protect himself, and annoy those that assailed him still increased, so that he thought he had as little reason as any man to fear the insults of the Sabeans and Chaldeans.

2. If he looked abroad, he found he had a good interest and well confirmed. As he had no reason to dread the power of his enemies, so neither had he any reason to distrust the fidelity of his friends: to the last moment of his prosperity they continued their respects to him, and their dependence on him. What had he to fear who so gave counsel, as, in effect, to give law, to all his neighbours? Nothing sure could be done against him, when really nothing was done without him.

1. He was the oracle of his country. He was consulted as an oracle, and his dictates were acquiesced in as oracles, *ver. 21.* When others could not be heard, all men gave ear to him, and kept silence at his counsel, knowing that as nothing could be said against it, so nothing needed to be added to it. And therefore after his words they spake not again, *ver. 22.* Why should men meddle with a subject that has already been exhausted?

2. He was the darling of his country: all about him were well pleased with every thing he said and did, as David's people were with him, *2 Sam. iii. 36.* He had the hearts and affections of all his neighbours, all his servants, tenants, subjects; never was man so much admired, nor so well beloved. (1.) They were thought happy to whom he spoke, and they thought themselves so: never were the dews of heaven so acceptable to the parched ground, as his wife discourses were to them that attended on them, especially to whom they were particularly accommodated and directed. His speech dropped upon them, and they waited for it as for the rain, *ver. 22, 23.* wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, catching at them, laying hold on them, and treasuring them up as apophthegms. His servants that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom, would not have envied Solomon's. Those are wise, or are likely to be so, that know how to value wise discourse, that wish for it, and wait for it, and drink it in as the earth doth the rain that comes oft upon it. *Heb. vi. 7.* And those who have such an interest as Job had in the esteem of others, whose *ipse dixit* goes so far, as they have a great opportunity of doing good, so they must take great care lest they do hurt, for an ill word out of their mouths is very infectious. (2.) Much more happy were they thought on whom he smiled, and they thought themselves so, *ver. 24.* If I laughed

on them, designing thereby to shew my self pleased in them, or pleasant with them, it was such a favour that they believed it not for joy, or because it was so rare a thing to see this grave man smile. Many seek the rulers favour: Job was a ruler whose favour was courted, and valued at a high rate. He to whom a great prince gave a kiss was envied by another to whom he only gave a golden cup. Familiarity oft breeds contempt, but if Job at any time saw fit for his own diversion to make himself free with those about him, yet it did not in the least diminish the veneration they had for him: *the light of his countenance they cast not down.* So wisely did he dispense his favours as not to make them cheap, and so wisely did they receive them, as not to make themselves unworthy of them another time.

3. He was the sovereign of his country, *ver. 25.* He chose out their way, sat at the helm, and steered for them, all referring themselves to his conduct, and submitting themselves to his command. To this perhaps in many countries monarchy owed its rise: such a man as Job, that so far excelled all his neighbours in wisdom and integrity could not but sit chief, and the fool will of course be servant to the wise in heart: and if the wisdom did but for a while run in the blood, the honour and power would certainly attend it, and so by degrees become hereditary. Two things recommended Job to the sovereignty. (1.) That he had the authority of a commander, or general; he dwelt as a king in the army, giving orders which were not to be disputed. Every one that has the spirit of wisdom has not the spirit of government, but Job had both, and when there was occasion, could take on as the king in the army doth, and say, go, come, and do this. *Matth. viii. 9.* (2.) That yet he had the tenderness of a comforter. He was as ready to succour those in distress, as if it had been his office to comfort the mourners: Eliphaz himself owned he had been very good at that, *chap. iv. 3. Thou hast strengthened the weak hands.* And this he now reflected upon with pleasure, when he was himself a mourner: but we find it easier to comfort others with the comforts wherewith we ourselves have been formerly comforted, than to comfort ourselves with those comforts wherewith we have formerly comforted others.

I know not but we may look upon Job as a type and figure of Christ, in his power and prosperity: our Lord Jesus is such a king as Job was; the poor man's king, who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, and upon whom the blessing of a world ready to perish comes; see *Psal. lxxii. 2, &c.* To him therefore let us give ear, and let him sit chief in our hearts.

C H A P. XXX.

It is a melancholy But now which this chapter begins with. Adversity is here described as much to the life as prosperity was there, and the height of that did but increase the depth of this: God sits the one over against the other, and so did Job, that his afflictions might appear the more grievous, and consequently his case the more piteous. (1.) He had lived in great honour, but now he had fallen into disgrace, and was much vilified, even by the meanest, as ever he had been magnified by the greatest; this he insists much on, ver. 1—14. (2.) He had had much inward comfort and delight, but now he was a terror and burthen to himself, ver. 15, 16. and overwhelmed with sorrow, ver. 28—31. (3.) He had long enjoyed a good state of health, but now he was sick and in pain, ver. 17—19, 29, 30. (4.) Time was when the secret of God was with him, but now his communication with heaven was cut off, ver. 20—22. (5.) He had promised himself a long life, but now he saw death at the door, ver. 23. One thing he mentions, which aggravated his affliction, that it surprised him when he looked for peace. But two things gave him some relief. (1.) That his troubles would not follow him to the grave, ver. 24. (2.) That his conscience witnessed for him, that in his prosperity, he had sympathized with those that were in misery, ver. 25.

1. **B**UT now they that are younger than I, have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. 2. Yea, whereto might the strength of their hands profit me, in whom old age was perished? 3. For want and famine they were solitary: fleeing into the wilderness, in former time desolate and waste: 4. Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat. 5. They were driven forth from among men, (they cried after them, as after a thief) 6. To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. 7. Among the bushes they brayed, under the nettles they were gathered together. 8. They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. 9. And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word. 10. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. 11. Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bri-

dle before me. 12. Upon my right hand rise the youth, they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction. 13. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper. 14. They came upon me, as a wide breaking in of waters: in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me.

Here Job makes a very large and sad complaint of the great disgrace he was fallen into, from the height of honour and reputation, which was exceeding grievous and cutting to such an ingenious spirit as Job's was. Two things he insists upon, as very aggravating.

1. The meanness of the persons that affronted him. As it added much to his honour in the day of his prosperity, that princes and nobles shewed him respect, and paid a deference to him, so it added no less to his disgrace in his adversity, that he was kicked by the footmen, and trampled upon by those that were not only every way his inferiors, but were the meanest and most contemptible of all mankind. None can be represented more base than they are here represented, who insulted Job upon all accounts.

(1.) They were young, younger than he, *ver. 1.* the youth, *ver. 12.* who ought to have behaved themselves respectfully towards him for his age and gravity. Even the children in their play, played upon him, as the children of Bethel upon the prophet, *go up, thou bald-head.* Children soon learn to be scornful, when they see their parents so.

(2.) They were of a mean extraction: their fathers were so very despicable, that such a man as Job would have disdained to take them into the lowest service about his house, as that of tending the sheep, and attending the shepherds, with the dogs of his flock, *ver. 1.* They were so shabby that they were not fit to be seen among his servants, so silly that they were not to be employed, and so false that they were not fit to be trusted in the meanest post. Job here speaks what he might have done, not what he did: he was not of such a spirit as to set any of the children of men with the dogs of his flock, he knew the dignities of the human nature better than so.

(3.) They and their families were the unprofitable burthens of the earth, and good for nothing; Job himself with all his prudence and patience could make nothing of them, *ver. 2.* The young were not fit for labour they were so lazy, and went about their work so awkwardly: *whereto might the strength of their hands profit me?* The old were not to be advised with in the smallest matters, for in them was old age indeed, but their old age was perished, they were twice children.

(4.) They were extream poor, *ver. 3.* they were ready to famish, for they would not dig, and to beg they were ashamed. Had they been brought to necessity by the providence of God, their neighbours would have fought them out as proper objects of charity, and would have relieved them; but being brought into straits by their own slothfulness and wastefulness, nobody was forward to relieve them; but they were forced to flee into the deserts both for shelter and sustenance, and were put to sorry shifts indeed, when they cut up mallows by the bushes, and were glad to eat them for want of food that was fit for them, *ver. 4.* See what hunger will bring men to: one half of the world doth not know how the other half lives, yet those that have abundance, ought to think sometimes of those whose fare is very coarse, and who are brought to a short allowance of that too; but we must own the righteousness of God, and not think it strange if slothfulness clothes men with rags, and the idle soul be made to suffer hunger. This beggarly world is full of the devil's poor.

(5.) They were very scandalous wicked people, not only the burthens but the plagues of the places where they lived; arrant scoundrels, and the scum of the country. *They were driven forth from among men, ver. 5.* They were such lying, thieving, lurking, mischievous people, that the best service the magistrates could do, was to rid the country of them, while the very mob cried after them as after a thief: away with such fellows from the earth, it is not fit they should live. They were lazy and would not work, and therefore they were exclaimed against as thieves, and justly, for they that do not earn their bread by honest labour, do in effect steal the bread out of other peoples mouths; an idle fellow is a publick nuisance; but it is better drive such into a work-house, than as here into a wilderness, which will punish them indeed, but never reform them. They were forced to dwell in caves of the earth, and they brayed like asses among the bushes, *ver. 6, 7.* See what is the lot of those that have the cry of the country, the cry of their own conscience, against them, they cannot but be in a continual terror and confusion: they groan among the trees, (so Broughton) and smart among the nettles; they are stung and scratched there, where they hoped to be sheltered and protected. See what miseries wicked people bring themselves to in this world, yet this is nothing to what is in reserve for them in the other world.

(6.) They were all that is base, *ver. 8.* They had nothing at all to recommend them to any man's esteem: they were a vile kind; yea, a kind without fame; people that nobody could give a good word to, nor had a good wish for; they were banished from

from the earth, as being viler than the earth. One would not think it possible, that ever the human nature should sink so low, and degenerate so far, as it did in these people. When we thank God we are men, we have reason to thank him that we are not such men. But such as these were abusive to Job. (1.) In revenge, because when he was in prosperity and power, like a good magistrate, he put the laws in execution, which were in force against vagabonds and rogues, and sturdy beggars, which these base people now remembered against him. (2.) In triumph over him, because they thought he was now become like one of them. Alluding to *Isa.* xiv. 10, 11. The abjects, men of mean spirits, insult over the miserable, *Psal.* xxxv. 15.

2. The greatness of the affronts that were given him: it cannot be imagined how abusive they were.

(1.) They made ballads of him, with which they made themselves and their companions merry, *ver.* 9. *I am their song, and their by-word.* Those have a very base spirit, that turn the calamities of their honest neighbours into a jest, and can sport themselves with their griefs.

(2.) They shunned him as a loathsome spectacle, abhorred him, fled far from him, (*ver.* 10.) as an ugly monster, or as one infected; they that were themselves driven out from among men, would have driven him out. For,

(3.) They expressed the greatest scorn and indignation against him that could be. They spit in his face, or were ready to do so; they tripped up his heels, pushed away his feet, *ver.* 12. kicked him, either in wrath because they hated him, or in sport, to make themselves merry with him, as they did with their companions at foot-ball. The best of saints have sometimes received the worst of injuries and indignities, from a spiteful, scornful, wicked world, and must not think it strange; our master himself was thus abused.

(4.) They were very malicious against him, and not only made a jest of him, but made a prey of him; not only affronted him, but set themselves to do him all the real mischief they could devise. *They raise up against me, the ways of their destruction;* or, as some read it, *they cast upon me the cause of their wo,* i. e. they lay the blame of their being driven out upon me; and it is common for criminals to hate the judges and laws by which they are punished. But, under this pretence, (1.) They accused him falsely, and misrepresented his former conversation, which is here called marring his path. They reflected upon him as a tyrant and an oppressor, because he had done justice upon them; and perhaps Job's friends grounded their uncharitable censures of him (*chap.* xxii. 6, &c.) upon the unjust and unreasonable clamours of these sorry people; and it was an instance of their great weakness and inconsideration, for who can be innocent, if the accusations of such fellows may be heeded? they not only triumphed in his calamity, but set it forward, and did all they could to add to his miseries, and make them more grievous to him. It is a great sin to forward the calamity of any, especially of good people: in this they have no helper, nobody to set them on, or to countenance them in it; nobody to bear them out or to protect them, but they do it of their own accord; they are fools in other things, but wise enough to do mischief, and need no help in inventing that: some read it thus, *they hold my heaviness a profit, tho' they be never the better.* Wicked people, tho' they get nothing by the calamities of others, yet rejoice in them.

5. They that did him all this mischief were numerous, unanimous, and violent, *ver.* 14. *They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters,* when the dam is broke; or, they come, as soldiers into a broad breach which they have made in the wall of a besieged city, pouring in upon me with the utmost fury; and in this they took a pride and a pleasure, in the desolation they rolled themselves, as a man rolls himself in a soft and easy bed; and they rolled themselves upon him with all the weight of their malice.

Lastly, All this contempt put upon him, was caused by the troubles he was in, *ver.* 11. *Because he hath loosed my cord;* hath taken away the honour and power with which I was girded, (*chap.* xii. 18.) hath scattered what I had got together, and untwisted all my affairs; because he hath afflicted me, therefore they have let loose the bridle before me, i. e. have given themselves a liberty to say and do what they please against me. They that by providence are stripped of their honour, may expect to be loaded with contempt by inconsiderate ill-natured people. Because he hath loosed his cord (the original has that reading also) i. e. because he hath taken off his bridle of restraint from off their malice; they cast away the bridle from me, i. e. they make no account of my authority, nor stand in awe of me. It is owing to the hold God has of the consciences, even of bad men, and the restraints he lays upon them, that we are not continually thus insulted and abused; and if at any time we meet with such ill treatment, we must acknowledge the hand of God in taking off those restraints; as David did when Shimei cursed him: *So let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.*

Now in all this, (1.) We may see the uncertainty of worldly honour, and particularly of popular applause: how suddenly a man may fall from the height of dignity into the depth of disgrace. What little cause therefore have men to be ambitious or proud of that which may be so easily lost, and what little confi-

dence is to be put in it? They that to day cry, *Hosanna,* may to morrow cry, *crucify;* but there is an honour which comes from God, which if we secure, we shall find it not thus changeable and loseable. (2.) We may see that it has often been the lot of very wise and good men, to be trampled upon and abused. And, (3.) That those who look only at the things that are seen, despise those whom the world frowns upon, tho' they are never so much the favourites of heaven. Nothing is more grievous in poverty than that it renders men contemptible: *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam ut semper odit damnatos.* (4.) We may see in Job, a type of Christ, who was thus made a reproach of men, and despised of the people, *Psal.* xxii. 6. *Isa.* liii. 3. and who hid not his face from shame and spitting, but bore it better than Job did.

15. Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud. 16. And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me. 17. My bones are pierced in me in the night-season: and my sinews take no rest. 18. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat. 19. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. 20. I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not. 21. Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thy self against me. 22. Thou liftest me up to the wind: thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance. 23. For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. 24. Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction. 25. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? 26. When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness. 27. My bowels boiled, and rested not: the days of affliction prevented me. 28. I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation. 29. I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls. 30. My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burnt with heat. 31. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.

In this second part of Job's complaint, which is very bitter and has a great many sorrowful accents upon it; we may observe a great deal that he complains of, and some little that he comforts himself with.

1. Here is a great deal that he complains of.

(1.) In general, it was a day of great affliction and sorrow. (1.) Affliction seized him, and surprised him. It seized him, *ver.* 16. *The days of affliction have taken hold upon me;* have caught me, so some; they have arrested me, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, claps him on the back, and lays him by the heels. When trouble comes with commission, it will take fast hold, and not lose its hold. It surprised him, *ver.* 27. *The days of affliction prevented me.* i. e. they came upon me without giving me any previous warning; I did not expect them, nor made any provision for such an evil day: observe, he reckons his affliction by days, which will soon be numbered and finished, and are nothing to the ages of eternity, *2 Cor.* iv. 17. (2.) He was in great sorrow by reason of it. His bowels boiled with grief, and rested not, *ver.* 27. The sense of his calamities was continually preying upon his spirits, without any intermission: he went mourning from day to day, always sighing, always weeping, and such a cloud was constantly upon his mind, that he went in effect without the sun, *ver.* 28. He had nothing that he could take any comfort in; he abandoned himself to a perpetual sorrow, as one that, like Jacob, resolved to go to the grave mourning: he walked out of the sun, (so some) in dark shady places, as melancholy people use to do. If he went into the congregation, to join with them in solemn worship, instead of standing up calmly to desire their prayers, he stood up and cried aloud, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, like one half distracted: if he appeared in publick, to receive visits, when the fit came upon him, he could not contain himself, nor maintain any thing of a decorum, but stood up and shrieked aloud. Thus he was a brother to dragons and owls, *ver.* 29. both in choosing solitude and retirement, as they do, *Isa.* xxxiv. 13. and in making a fearful hideous noise as they do; his inconsiderate complaints were fitly compared to their inarticulate ones.

2. The terror and trouble that seized his soul was the worst part of his calamity, *ver.* 15, 16. (1.) If he looked forward, he saw every thing frightful before him: If he endeavoured to shake off his terrors, they turned furiously upon him; if he endeavoured to outrun them, they pursued his soul, as swiftly and violently as the wind. He complained at first, of the terrors of God setting themselves

set in array against him, chap. vi. 4. And still, which way soever he looked, they turned upon him; which way soever he fled, they pursued him. *My Soul*.—Heb. *My principal one*. *My prince*; for the soul is the principal part of the man; it is our glory; it is every way more excellent than the body, and therefore that which pursues the soul, and threatens that, should be most dreaded. (2.) If he looked back, he saw all the good he had formerly enjoyed removed from him, and nothing left him but the bitter remembrance of it; my welfare and prosperity passeth away, as suddenly, swiftly and irrecoverably as a cloud. (3.) If he looked within, he found his spirit quite sunk, and unable to bear his infirmity, not only wounded, but *poured out upon him*, ver. 16. He was not only weak as water, but in his own apprehension, lost as water spilt upon the ground. Compare *Psal.* xii. 14. *My heart is melted like wax*.

(3.) His bodily diseases were very grievous; for (1.) He was full of pain, piercing pain, pain that went to the bone, to all his bones, ver. 17. It was a *sword in his bones*, which *pierced him in the night season*, when he should have been refreshed with sleep; his nerves were affected with strong convulsions, his sinews took no rest. By reason of his pain, he could take no rest, but sleep departed from his eyes. *His bones were burnt with heat*, ver. 30. He was in a constant fever, which dried up the radical moisture, and even consumed the marrow in his bones. See how frail our bodies are, which carry in themselves the seeds of our own disease and death. (2.) He was full of sores. Some that are pained in their bones, yet sleep in a whole skin, but Satan's commission against Job, extending both to his bone, and to his flesh, he spared neither. *His skin was black upon him*, ver. 30. The blood settled, the sores suppurated, and by degrees scabbed over, which made his skin look black. Even his garment had its colour changed with the continual running of his boils, and the soft clothing he used to wear, was now grown so stiff, that all his garments were *like his collar*, ver. 18. It would be noisome to describe what a condition poor Job was in for want of clean linen, and good attendance, and what filthy rags all his clothes were. Some think, that among other diseases, Job was ill of a quinsy or swelling in his throat, and that was it which bound him about like a stiff collar.

Thus was he *cast into the mire*, ver. 19. *compared to mire*, so some: his body looked more like a heap of dirt, than any thing else. Let none be proud of their clothing, nor proud of their cleanness, they know not but some disease or other may *change their garments*, and even *throw them into the mire*, and make them noisome both to themselves and others; *instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink*, Isa. iii. 24. We are but dust and ashes at the best, and our bodies vile bodies; but we are apt to forget it, till God by some sore disease make us sensibly to feel and own what we are, *I am become already like that dust and ashes* into which I must shortly be resolved: Wherever I go, I carry my grave about with me.

(4.) That which afflicted him most of all, was that God seemed to be his enemy, and to fight against him: It was *he* that *cast him into the mire*, ver. 19. and seemed to trample on him when he had him there: This cut him to the heart more than any thing else, (1.) That God did not appear for him. He addressed to him, but gained no grant; appealed to him, but gained no sentence; he was very importunate in his applications, but in vain, ver. 20. *I cry unto thee*, as one in earnest, I stand up and cry, as one waiting for an answer, but thou hearest not, thou regardest not, for any thing I can perceive. If our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it strange: Tho' the seed of Jacob did never seek in vain, yet they have often thought they did, and that God has not only been deaf, but angry at the prayers of his people, *Psal.* lxxx. 4. (2.) That God did *appear against him*: It is one of the worst words that ever Job spoke, that which he here chargeth upon God, ver. 21. *Thou art become cruel to me*; far be it from the God of mercy and grace, that he should be cruel to any; his compassions fail not, but especially that he should be so to his own children: Job was unjust and ungrateful when he said so of him, but harbouring hard thoughts of God was the sin which did, at this time, most easily beset him. Here (1.) He thought God fought against him, and stirred up his whole strength to ruin him. *With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself*, or art an adversary against me. He had better thoughts of God, chap. xxiii. 6. when he concluded he would *not plead against him with his great power*. God has an absolute sovereignty, and an irresistible strength, but he never useth either the one or the other, for the crushing or oppressing of any. (2.) He thought he insulted over him, ver. 22. *Thou liftest me up to the wind*, as a feather, or the chaff which the wind plays with; so unequal a match did Job think himself for omnipotence, and so unable was he to help himself, when he was made to ride, not in triumph but in terror, upon the wings of the wind, and the judgments of God did even dissolve his substance, as a cloud is dissolved and dispersed by the wind. Man's substance, take him in his best estate, is nothing before the power of God, it is soon dissolved.

(5.) He expected no other now, but that God, by these troubles, would shortly make an end of him. If I be made to ride upon the wind, I can count upon no other but to break my

neck shortly; and he speaks as if God had no other design upon him, but that, in all his dealings with him, *I know that thou wilt bring me*, with so much the more terror, *to death*, tho' I might have been brought thither without all this ado, for it is *the house appointed for all living*, ver. 23. The grave is a house, a narrow, dark, cold, ill-furnished house, but it will be our residence, where we shall rest and be safe; it is our long home, our own home, for it is our mother's lap, and in it we are gathered to our fathers. It is a house appointed for us, by him that has appointed us the bounds of all our habitations. It is appointed for all living.—It is the common receptacle, where rich and poor meet, it is appointed for the general rendezvous; we must all be brought thither shortly; it is God that brings us, for the keys of death and the grave are in his hand, and we may all know that, sooner or later he will bring us thither; it would be well for us, if we would duly consider it. *The living know that they shall die*; let us, each of us, know it with application.

(6.) There were two things that aggravated his trouble, and made it the less tolerable. (1.) That it was a very great disappointment to his expectation, ver. 26. *When I looked for good*, for more good, or at least the continuance of what I had, *then evil came*; such uncertain things are all our worldly enjoyments, and such a folly is it to feed our selves with great expectations from them. They that wait for light from the sparks of their creature comforts, will be wretchedly disappointed, and will *make their bed in the darkness*. (2.) That it was a very great change in his condition, ver. 31. My harp is not only laid by, and hung upon the willow trees, but it is *turned to mourning*, and my organ *into the voice of them that weep*. Job, in his prosperity, had taken the timbrel and harp, and *rejoiced at the sound of the organ*, chap. xxi. 12. Notwithstanding his gravity and grace, he had found time to be cheerful, but now his tune was altered: Let those therefore that rejoice, be *as tho' they rejoiced not*, for they know not how soon their *laughter* will be *turned into mourning*, and their *joy into heaviness*: Thus we see how much Job complains of: But,

2. Here is something in the midst of all, with which he comforts himself, and it is but a little. (1.) He foresees with comfort, that death will be the period of all his calamities, ver. 24. *Tho' God now, with a strong hand, opposed himself against him*, yet, faith he, *he will not stretch out his hand to the grave*: The hand of God's wrath would bring him to death, but would not follow him beyond death; his soul would be safe and happy in the world of spirits, his body safe and easy in the dust: Tho' men cry in his destruction; tho' when they are a-dying, there is a great deal of agony and out-cry, many a sigh and groan, and complaint, yet in the grave they feel nothing, they fear nothing, but all is quiet there: Tho' in hell, which is called destruction, they cry yet not in the grave; and I being delivered from the second death, the first to me will be an effectual relief. Therefore he wished he might be *hid in the grave*, chap. xiv. 13. (2.) He reflects with comfort upon the concern he always had for the calamities of others, when he was himself at ease, ver. 25. *Did not I weep for him that was in trouble?* Some think he herein complains of God, thinking it very hard, that he who had shewed mercy to others, should not himself find mercy; I would rather take it as a quieting consideration to himself; his conscience witnessed for him, that he had always sympathized with persons in misery, and done what he could to help them, and therefore had reason to expect that at length both God and his friends would pity him. They who mourn with them that mourn, will bear their own sorrows the better, when it comes to their turn to drink off the bitter cup. *Did not my soul burn for the poor?* So some read it, comparing it with that of St Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 29. *Who is offended, and I burn not?* As they who have been unmerciful and hard-hearted to others, may expect to hear of it from their own consciences, when they are themselves in trouble; so they who have considered the poor, and succoured them, the remembrance of that will make their bed easy in their sickness, *Psal.* xli. 1, 3.

C H A P. XXXI.

Job had often protested his integrity in general, here he doth it in particular instances; not in a way of commendation, for he doth not here proclaim his good deeds; but in his own just and necessary vindication, to clear himself from those crimes with which his friends had falsely charged him, which is a debt every man owes to his own reputation. Job's friends had been particular in their articles of impeachment against him, and therefore he is so in his protestation, which seems to refer especially to what Eliphaz had accused him of, chap. xxii. 6, &c. They had produced no witnesses against him, neither could they prove the things whereof they now accused him, and therefore he may well be admitted to purge himself upon oath, which he doth very solemnly, and with many awful imprecations of God's wrath, if he were guilty of those crimes; this protestation confirms God's character of him, that there was none like him in the earth; perhaps some of his accusers durst not have joined with him; for he not only acquits himself from those gross sins, which lie open to the eye of the world, but from many secret sins, which tho' he had been guilty of them, no body could have charged him with, because he will prove himself no hypocrite. Nor doth he only

maintain the cleanness of his practices, but shews also that in them he went upon good principles; that the reason of his eschewing evil, was because he feared God, and his piety was at the bottom of his justice and charity; and this crowns the proof of his sincerity. The sins from which he here acquits himself are, (1.) *Wantonness and uncleanness of heart*, ver. 1—4. (2.) *Fraud and injustice in commerce*, ver. 4—8. (3.) *Adultery*, ver. 9—12. (4.) *Haughtiness and severity towards his servants*, ver. 13—15. (5.) *Unmercifulness to the poor, the widows and the fatherless*, ver. 16—23. (6.) *Confidence in his worldly wealth*, ver. 24, 25. (7.) *Idolatry*, ver. 26—28. (8.) *Revenge*, ver. 29—31. (9.) *Neglect of poor strangers*, ver. 32. (10.) *Hypocrisy in concealing his own sins, and cowardise in conniving at the sins of others*, ver. 33, 34. (11.) *From oppression, and the violent invasion of other peoples rights*, ver. 38—40. And towards the close he appeals to God's judgment concerning his integrity, ver. 35—37. Now in all this we may see, (1.) *The sense of the patriarchal age, concerning good and evil, and what was so long ago condemned as sinful; that is both hateful and hurtful*. (2.) *A noble pattern of piety and virtue proposed to us for our imitation, which if our consciences can witness for us that we conform to it, will be our rejoicing, as it was Job's in the day of evil*.

1. **I** Made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? 2. For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high? 3. Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? 4. Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? 5. If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit; 6. Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. 7. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands: 8. Then let me sow, and let another eat: yea, let my offspring be rooted out.

The lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world, are the two fatal rocks on which multitudes split; against these Job protests he was always careful to stand upon his guard.

1. Against the lusts of the flesh. He not only kept himself clear from adultery, defiling his neighbours wives, ver. 9. but from all lewdness with any women whatsoever: He kept no concubine, no mistress, but was inviolably faithful to the marriage-bed, tho' his wife was none of the wisest, best, or kindest. From the beginning it was so, that a man should have but one wife, and cleave to her only; and Job kept close to that institution, and abhorred the thought of transgressing it; for tho' his greatness might tempt him to it, his goodness kept him from it. Job was now in pain and sickness of body, and under that affliction, it is in a particular manner comfortable, if our consciences can witness for us, that we have been careful to preserve our bodies in chastity, and to possess those vessels in sanctification and honour, pure from the lusts of uncleanness. Now observe here,

1. What the resolutions were, which in this matter he kept to, ver. 1. *I made a covenant with mine eyes*, i. e. I watched against the occasions of the sin, *why then should I think upon a maid?* i. e. by that means, through the grace of God, I kept myself from the very first step towards it. So far was he from wanton dalliances, or any act of lasciviousness, that (1.) He would not so much as admit a wanton look: *He made a covenant with his eyes*; made this bargain with them, that he would allow them the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun, and the glory of God shining in the visible creation, provided they would never fasten upon any object that might occasion any impure imaginations, much less any impure desires in his mind; and under this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it in penitential tears. Note, Those that would keep their hearts pure, must guard their eyes, which are both the outlets and inlets of uncleanness: Hence we read of wanton eyes, *Isa. iii. 16.* and *eyes full of adultery*, *2 Pet. ii. 14.* The first sin began in the eye, *Gen. iii. 6.* What we must not meddle with, we must not lust after; and what we must not lust after, we must not look at, not the forbidden wealth, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* Not the forbidden wine, *Prov. xxiii. 31.* Not the forbidden woman, *Mat. v. 28.* (2.) He would not so much as allow a wanton thought; *Why then should I think upon a maid*, with any unchast fancy, or desire towards her? Shame and sense of honour might restrain him from soliciting the chastity of a beautiful virgin, but only grace and the fear of God would restrain him from so much as thinking of it. Those are not chaste that are not so in spirit as well as body, *1 Cor. vii. 34.* See how agreeable Christ's exposition of the seventh commandment is, with the antient sense of it, and how much better Job understood it than the Pharisees, tho' they sat in Moses's chair.

2. What the reasons were which in this matter he was governed by. It was not for fear of reproach among men, tho' that is to be considered, *Prov. vi. 33.* but for fear of the wrath and curse of God. He knew very well, (1.) That uncleanness is a sin that

forfeits all good, and shuts us out from the hope of it, ver. 2. *What portion of God is there from above?* What blessing can such impure sinners expect from the pure and holy God, or what token of his favour? What inheritance of the Almighty can they look for from on high? There is no portion, no inheritance, no true happiness for a soul, but what is in God, in the Almighty, and what comes from above, from on high: But those that wallow in uncleanness render themselves utterly unfit for communion with God, either in grace here, or in glory hereafter, and become allied to unclean spirits, which are for ever separated from him, and then what portion, what inheritance can they have with God? No unclean thing shall enter into the New Jerusalem, that holy city.

(2.) It is a sin that incurs divine vengeance, ver. 3. It will certainly be the sinner's ruin, if it be not repented of in time. Is not destruction a swift and sure destruction to those wicked people, and a strange punishment to the workers of this iniquity? Fools make a mock at this sin, make a jest of it; it is with them a peccadillo, a trick of youth; but they deceive themselves with vain words, for because of these things, how light soever they make of them, the wrath of God, the insupportable wrath of the eternal God comes upon the children of disobedience, *Eph. v. 6.* There are some sinners whom God sometimes goes out of the common road of providence to meet with; such are these: The destruction of Sodom is a strange punishment. Is there not alienation (so some read it) to the workers of iniquity. This is the sinfulness of the sin that alienates the mind from God, *Eph. iv. 18.* 19. and this is the punishment of the sinners, that they shall be eternally set at a distance from him, *Rev. xxii. 15.*

(3.) It cannot be hid from the all-seeing God. A wanton thought cannot be so close, nor a wanton look so quick as to escape his cognizance, much less any act of uncleanness so secretly done as to be out of his sight. If Job was at any time tempted to this sin, he restrained himself from it, and all approaches to it, with this pertinent thought, ver. 4. *Doth not he see my ways?* as Joseph did, *Gen. xxxix. 9.* *How can I do it, and sin against God?* Two things Job had an eye to. (1.) God's omniscience: It is a great truth, that God's eyes are upon all the ways of men, *Prov. v. 20, 21.* but Job here mentions it with application to himself and his own actions; *Doth not he see my ways?* O God thou hast searched me and known me. God sees what rule we walk by, what company we walk with, what end we walk towards, and therefore what ways we walk in. (2.) His observance. He doth not only see but takes notice; he counts all my steps, all my false steps in the way of duty, all my by-steps into the way of sin. He not only sees our ways in general, but takes cognizance of our particular steps in these ways, every action, every motion: He keeps count of all, because he will call us to account, will bring every work into judgment. God takes a more exact notice of us than we do of our selves, for who ever counted his own steps? Yet God doth, let us therefore walk circumspectly.

2. He stood upon his guard against the love of the world, and carefully avoided all sinful indirect means of getting wealth. He dreaded all forbidden profit as much as all forbidden pleasure. Let us see,

1. What his protestation is: In general, that he had been honest and just in all his dealings, and never to his knowledge did any body any wrong. (1.) He never walked with vanity, i. e. he never durst tell a lie to get a good bargain. It was never his way to banter or equivocate, or make many words in his dealings: Some mens constant walk is a constant cheat: They either make what they have more than it is, that they may be trusted; or less than it is, that nothing may be expected from them. But Job was none of those: His wealth was not gotten by vanity, tho' now diminished, *Prov. xiii. 11.* (2.) He never hastened to deceit. Those that deceive must be quick and sharp, but Job's quickness and sharpness was never turned that way: He never made haste to be rich by deceit; but always acted cautiously, lest thro' inconsideration he should do an unjust thing. Note, What we have in the world, may be either used with comfort, or lost with comfort, if it was honestly got. (3.) His step never turned out of the way, the way of justice and fair dealing, from that he never deviated, ver. 7. He not only took care not to walk in a constant course and way of deceit, but he did not so much as take one step out of the way of honesty. In every particular action and affair we must closely tie our selves up to the rules of righteousness. (4.) His heart did not walk after his eyes, i. e. He did not covet what he saw, that was another's, nor wish it his own. Covetousness is called the lust of the eye, *1 John ii. 16.* Achan saw, and then took the accursed thing. That heart must needs wander that walks after the eyes; for then it looks no further than the things that are seen; whereas it ought to be in heaven, whither the eyes cannot reach: It should follow the dictates of religion and right reason: If it follow the eye, it will be misled to that for which God will bring men into judgment, *Eccles. xi. 9.* (4.) That no blot had cleaved to his hands, i. e. he was not chargeable with getting any thing dishonestly, or keeping that which was another's, whenever it appeared to be so. Injustice is a blot, a blot to the estate, a blot to the owner; it spoils the beauty of both, and therefore is to be dreaded. Those that deal much in the world may perhaps have a blot come upon their hands, but they must walk

wash it off again by repentance and restitution, and not let it cleave to their hands. See *Iſa.* xxxiii. 15.

2. How he ratifies his protestation. So confident is he of his own honesty, that (1.) He is willing to have his goods searched, *ver.* 6. *Let me be weighed in an even balance, i. e.* Let what I have got be enquired into, and it will be found to weigh well; a sign it was not gotten by vanity, for then Tekel had been written on it, weighed in the balance, and found too light. An honest man is so far from dreading a trial, that he desires it rather, being well assured that God doth know his integrity, and will approve it, and the trial of it would be to his praise and honour. (2.) He is willing to forfeit the whole cargo, if there were found among them any prohibited contraband goods, any thing but what he came honestly by, *ver.* 8. *Let me sow, and let another eat*, which was already agreed to be the doom of oppressors, *chap.* v. 5.—xviii. 2. and let my offspring, all the trees that I have planted be rooted out. This intimates, that he believed the sin did deserve this punishment, that ordinarily it is thus punished: But that tho' now his estate was ruined, and then if ever his conscience would have brought it to his mind, yet he knew himself innocent, that he would venture all the poor remains of his estate upon the issue of the trial.

9. If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbours door: 10. Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. 11. For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. 12. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase. 13. If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me: 14. What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? 15. Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?

Two more instances we have here of Job's integrity,

1. That he had a very great abhorrence of the sin of adultery. As he did not wrong his own marriage-bed, by keeping a concubine, he did not so much as think upon a maid, *ver.* 1. so he was careful not to offer any injury to his neighbour's marriage-bed. Let us see here,

1. How clear he was from this sin, *ver.* 9. (1.) He did not so much as covet his neighbour's wife, for even *his heart was not deceived by a woman*: The beauty of another man's wife did not kindle in him any unchaste desires, nor was he ever moved by the allurements of an adulterous woman, such as is described, *Prov.* vii. 6, &c. See the original of all the defilements of the life, they come from a deceived heart. Every sin is deceitful, and none more so than the sin of uncleanness. (2.) He never compassed or imagined any unchaste design: He never *laid wait at his neighbour's door* to get an opportunity to debauch his wife in his absence, when the good man was not at home, *Prov.* vii. 19. See *chap.* xxiv. 15.

2. What a dread he had of this sin, and what frightful apprehensions he had concerning the malignity of it. That it is a *heinous crime*, *ver.* 11. one of the greatest, vilest sins that a man can be guilty of, highly provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the soul: And concerning the mischievousness of it, and the punishment it deserved, he owns, that if he were guilty of that heinous crime, (1.) His family might justly be made infamous in the highest degree, *ver.* 10. *Let my wife grind to another*. Let her be a slave, so some; a harlot, so others. God often punisheth the sins of one with the sin of another, the adultery of the husband with the adultery of the wife, as in David's case, *2 Sam.* xii. 11. which doth not in the least excuse the treachery of the adulterous wife, but how unrighteous soever she is, God is righteous. See *Hos.* iv. 12. *Your spouses shall commit adultery*. Note, Those who are not just and faithful to their relations, must not think it strange if their relations be unjust and unfaithful to them. (2.) He himself might justly be made a publick example: For it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges; yea, tho' they who be guilty of it are themselves judges, as Job was. Note, Adultery is a crime which the civil magistrate ought to take cognizance of, and punish: So it was adjudged even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses made it capital. It is an evil word to which the sword of justice ought to be a terror. (3.) It might justly become the ruin of his estate; nay, he knew it would be so, *ver.* 12. *It is a fire*. Lust is a fire in the soul: They that indulge it are said to burn. It consumes all that is good there, the convictions, the comforts, and lays the conscience waste. It kindles the fire of God's wrath, which, if not extinguished by the blood of Christ, will burn to the lowest hell: It will consume even to that eternal destruction: It consumes the body, *Prov.* v. 11. consumes the substance, it roots out all the increase. Burning lusts bring burning judgments. Perhaps it alludes to the burning of Sodom, which was intended for an example to those who should afterwards in like manner live ungodly.

2. That he had a very great tenderness for his servants, and ruled them with a gentle hand. He had a great household, and he managed it well. By this he evidenced his sincerity, that he had grace to govern his passion as well as his appetite, and he that in these two things hath the rule of his own spirit, is *better than the mighty*, *Prov.* xvi. 32. Here observe,

1. What were Job's condescensions to his servants, *ver.* 13. He did not *despise the cause of his man-servant*, no, nor of his *maid-servant*, when they contended with him, *i. e.* If they contradicted him in any thing, he was willing to hear their reasons: If they offended him, or were accused to him, he would patiently hear what they had to say for themselves, in their own vindication, or excuse. Nay, if they complained of any hardship he put upon them, he did not brow-beat them, and bid them hold their tongues, but gave them leave to tell their story, and redress their grievances as far as it appeared they had right on their side. He was tender of them, not only when they served him and pleased him, but even when they contended with him. Herein he was a great example to masters to *give unto their servants that which is just and equal*; nay, to do the same things to them that they expect from them, *Col.* iv. 1. *Eph.* vi. 9. and not to rule them with rigour, and carry it with a high hand. Many of Job's servants were slain in his service, *chap.* i. 15, 16, 17. the rest were unkind and undutiful to him, and despised his cause, tho' he never despised theirs, *chap.* xix. 15, 16. but he had this comfort, that in his prosperity he had carried it well towards them. Note, When relations are either removed from us, or embittered to us, the testimony of our consciences, that we have done our duty to them, will be a great support and comfort to us.

2. What were the considerations that moved him to treat his servants thus kindly: He had herein an eye to God, both as his Judge and as their Maker. (1.) As his Judge, He considered, if I should be imperious and severe with my servants, *what then shall I do, when God riseth up?* He considered that he had a Master in heaven, to whom he was accountable, who will rise up, and will visit, and we are concerned to consider *what we shall do in the day of his visitation*, *Iſa.* x. 3. And in consideration of this, that we are undone if God should then be strict and severe with us, we ought to be very mild and gentle towards all with whom we have to do. Consider what would become of us, if God should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, should take all advantages against us, and insist upon all his just demands from us: If he should visit every offence, and take every forfeiture; if he should always chide, and keep his anger for ever. And let not us be thus rigorous with our inferiors. Consider what will become of us, if we be cruel and unmerciful to our brethren. The cries of the injured will be heard, the sin of the injurious will be punished, they that shewed no mercy shall find none, and what shall we do then?

(2.) As his and his servants Creator, *ver.* 15. when he was tempted to be harsh with his servants to deny them right, and turn a deaf ear to their reasonings, this thought came very seasonably into his mind, *Did not he that made me in the womb, make him?* I am a creature as well as he, and my being is derived and depending as well as his. He partakes of the same nature that I do, and is the work of the same hand: *Have we not all one Father?* Note, Whatever difference there is among men in their outward condition, in their capacity of mind, or strength of body, or place in the world, he that made the one made the other also; which is a good reason why we should not mock at mens natural infirmities, nor trample upon those that are any way our inferiors, but in every thing do as they would be done by. It is a rule of justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*, and therefore since there is so great a parity among men, they being all made of the same mold, by the same power, for the same end, notwithstanding the disparity of our outward condition, we are bound so far to set our selves upon the level with those we deal with, as to do to them in all respects as we would they should do to us.

16. If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail: 17. Or have eaten my morsel my self alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof: 18. (For from my youth he was brought up with me as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb) 19. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering: 20. If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep: 21. If I have lift up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: 22. Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. 23. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

Eliphaz had particularly charged Job with unmercifulness to the poor, *chap.* xxii. 6, &c. Thou hast *with-holden bread from the hungry, stripped the naked of their clothing*, and sent widows away empty. Now one would think he could not have been so very positive and express in his charge, but there had been some truth in it, some ground for it, and yet it appears by Job's protestation it

was utterly false and groundless, he was never guilty of any such thing. See here,

1. The testimony which Job's conscience gave in concerning his constant carriage towards the poor. He is most large upon this head, because in this matter he was most particularly accused. He solemnly protests,

(1.) That he had never been wanting to do good to them as there was occasion, to the utmost of his ability. He was always compassionate to the poor, and careful of them, especially the widows and fatherless, that were destitute of help. (1.) He was always ready to grant their desires, and answer their expectations, *ver. 16.* If a poor body begged a kindness of him, he was ready to gratify him; if he could but perceive by the widow's mournful craving look, that she expected an alms from him, tho' she had not confidence enough to ask it, he had compassion enough to give it, and *never caused the eyes of the widow to fail.* (2.) He put a respect upon the poor, and did them honour; for he took the fatherless children to eat with him, at his own table, they should fare as he fared, and be familiar with him, and he would shew himself pleased with their company, as if they had been his own, *ver. 17.* As it is one of the greatest grievances of poverty, that it exposeth to contempt, so it is none of the least supports to the poor to be respected. (3.) He was very tender of them, and had a fatherly concern for them, *ver. 18.* He was a father to the fatherless, took care of orphans, brought them up with him under his own eye, and gave them not only maintenance but education. He was a guide to the widow, who had lost the guide of her youth; he advised her in her affairs, took cognizance of them, and undertook the management of them. Those that need not our alms, may yet have occasion for our counsel, and it may be a real kindness to them. This Job saith he did *from his youth, from his mother's womb, i. e.* he had something of tenderness and compassion woven into his nature: He began betimes to do good ever since he could remember, he had always some poor widow or fatherless child under his care. His parents taught him betimes to pity and relieve the poor, and brought up orphans with him. (4.) He provided food convenient for them; they eat of the same morsels that he did, *ver. 17.* did not only cat after him of the crumbs that fell from his table, but eat with him of the best dish upon his table. They that have abundance, must not eat their morsels alone, as if they had none but themselves to take care of, nor indulge their appetite with a dainty bit by themselves, but take others to share with them, as David took Mephibosheth. (5.) He took particular care to clothe them that were without covering, which would be more expensive to him than feeding them, *ver. 19.* Poor people may perish for want of clothing, as well as for want of food, for want of clothing to lie in by night, or to go abroad in by day. If Job knew of any that were in this distress, he was forward to relieve them, and instead of giving rich and gaudy liveries to his servants, while the poor were turned off with rags that were ready to be thrown to the dunghil, he had good warm strong clothes made on purpose for them, of *the fleece of his sheep, ver. 20.* so that their loins, whenever they girt those garments about them, blessed him; they commended his charity, blessed God for him, and prayed God to bless him. Job's sheep were burned with fire from heaven, but this was his comfort, that when he had them he came honestly by them, and used them charitably, fed the poor with their flesh, and clothed them with their wool.

2. That he had never been accessory to the wronging of any that were poor. It might be said, perhaps he was kind here and there to a poor orphan that was a favourite, but to others he was oppressive: No, he was tender of all, and injurious to none: He never so much as *lift up his hand against the fatherless, ver. 21.* never threatned or frightned them, or offered to strike them; never used his power to crush them that stood in his way, or squeeze what he could out of them. Tho' he *saw his help in the gate, i. e.* tho' he had interest enough both in the people and in the judges, both to enable him to do it, and to bear him out when he had done it. Those that have it in their power to do an ill thing, and go thro' with it, and a prospect of getting by it, and yet do justly, and love mercy, and are firm to both, may afterwards reflect upon it with a great deal of comfort, as Job doth here.

2. The imprecation wherewith he confirms this protestation, *ver. 22.* If I have been oppressive to the poor, *let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone, i. e.* let the flesh rot off from the bone, and one bone be disjointed and broken off from another. Had he not been perfectly clear in this matter, he durst not thus have challenged the divine vengeance: And he intimates, that it is a righteous thing with God to break the arm that is lifted up against the fatherless, as he withered Jeroboam's arm that was stretched out against a prophet.

3. The principles by which Job was restrained from all uncharitableness and unmercifulness. He durst not abuse the poor; for tho' with his help in the gate, he could over-power them, yet he could not make his part good against that God who is the patron of oppressed poverty, and will not let oppressors go unpunished, *ver. 23.* *Destruction from God was a terror to me,* whenever I was tempted to this sin, and *by reason of his highness I could not endure the thought of making him my enemy.* He stood in awe, (1.) Of the majesty of God, as a God above him: He thought of his

highness, the infinite distance between him and God, which possessed him with such a reverence of him, as made him very circumspect in his whole conversation. They who oppress the poor, and pervert judgment and justice, forget that *he who is higher than the highest regardeth,* and *there is a higher than they,* who is able to deal with them; *Eccles. v. 8.* but Job considered this. (2.) Of the wrath of God, as a God that would certainly be against him, if he should wrong the poor. Destruction from God, because it would be a certain and an utter ruin to him, if he were guilty of this sin, was a constant terror to him, to restrain him from it. Note, Good men, even the best, have need to restrain themselves from sin with the fear of destruction from God, and all little enough: This should especially restrain us from all acts of injustice and oppression, that God himself is the avenger thereof. Even then when salvation from God is a comfort to us, yet destruction from God should be a terror to us. Adam in innocency was awed with a threatening.

24. If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, *Thou art my confidence:* 25. If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much: 26. If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness: 27. And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: 28. This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above. 29. If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lift up my self when evil found him: 30. (Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin, by wishing a curse to his soul) 31. If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied. 32. The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveller.

Four articles more of Job's protestation we have in these verses, which, as all the rest, not only assure us what he was and did, but teach us what we should be and do.

1. He protests that he never set his heart upon the wealth of this world, nor took the things of it for his portion and happiness. He had gold, he had fine gold, his wealth was great, and he had gotten much: Now our wealth is either advantageous or pernicious to us, according as we stand affected to it: If we make it our rest and our ruler, it will be our ruin; if we make it our servant and an instrument of righteousness, it will be a blessing to us. Job here tells how he stood affected to his worldly wealth, (1.) He put no great confidence in it: He did not *make gold his hope, ver. 24.* They are very unwise that do, and enemies to themselves, who depend upon it as sufficient to make them happy, who think themselves safe and honourable, and sure of comfort in having abundance of this world's goods. Some make it their hope and confidence for another world, as if it were a certain token of God's favour: And those who have so much sense as not to think so, yet promise themselves that it will be a portion for them in this life, whereas the things themselves are uncertain, and our satisfaction in them much more so. It is hard to have riches, and not to trust in riches, and that is it which makes it so difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, *Mat. xix. 23.* *Mark x. 24.* 2. He took no great complacency in it, *ver. 25.* *If I rejoiced because my wealth was great,* and boasted that *my hand had gotten much.* He took no pride in his wealth, as if it added any thing to his real excellency, nor did he think that his might and the power of his hand got it him, *Deut. viii. 17.* He took no pleasure in it, in comparison with the spiritual things which were the delight of his soul. His joy did not terminate in the gift, but pass thro' it to the giver. When he was in the midst of his abundance, he never said, *Soul, take thine ease* in these things, *eat, drink and be merry,* nor blessed himself in his riches. He did not inordinately rejoice in his wealth, and that helped him to bear the loss of it so patiently as he did. The way to weep, as *tho' we wept not,* is to rejoice, as *tho' we rejoiced not.* The less pleasure the enjoyment is, the less pain the disappointment will be.

2. He protests, that he never gave that worship and glory to the creature, which is due to God only: He was never guilty of idolatry, *ver. 26, 27, 28.* We do not find that Job's friends charged him with this. But there were those, it seems at that time, who were so sottish as to worship the sun and moon, else Job would not have mentioned it. Idolatry is one of the old ways which wicked men have trodden, and the most ancient idolatry was the worshipping the sun and moon, to which the temptation was most strong, as appears, *Deut. iv. 19.* where Moses speaks of the danger which the people were in, of being driven to worship them: But as yet it was practised secretly, and durst not appear in open view, as afterwards the most abominable idolatries did. Observe,

(1.) How far Job kept from this sin. He not only never bowed the knee to Baal, (which some think was designed to represent the sun) never fell down and worshipped the sun, but he kept his eye, his heart, and his lips clean from this sin. (1.) He never so much as beheld the sun or the moon in their pomp and lustre, with

with any other admiration of them, than what led him to give all the glory of their brightness and usefulness to their Creator. Against spiritual as well as corporal adultery, he made a covenant with his eyes, and this was his covenant, that whenever he looked at the lights of heaven, he should by faith look thro' them, and beyond them to the Father of lights. (2.) He kept his heart with all diligence, that that should not be secretly enticed to think, that there is a divine glory in their brightness, or a divine power in their influence, and that therefore divine honours are to be paid to them. Here is the source of idolatry; it begins in the heart; every man is tempted to that, as to other sins, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. (3.) He did not so much as put a compliment upon these pretended deities; did not perform the least and lowest act of adoration of them: *His mouth did not kiss his hand*, which, it is likely, was a ceremony then commonly used, even by some that yet would not be thought idolaters: It is an old-fashioned piece of civil respect among our selves, in making a bow, to kiss the hand; and it seems was antiently used in giving divine honours to the sun and moon: They could not reach to kiss them, as *the men that sacrificed, kissed the calves*, Hof. xiii. 2. 1 Kings xix. 18. but to shew their good will they kissed their hand, reverencing those as their masters, which God has made servants to this lower world, to hold the candle for us: Job never did it.

(2.) How ill Job thought of this sin, *ver. 28.* (1.) He looked upon it as an affront to the civil magistrate: *It were an iniquity to be punished by the judge*, as a publick nuisance, and hurtful to kings and provinces. Idolatry debauches mens minds, corrupts their manners, takes off the true sense of religion, which is the great bond of societies, and provokes God to give men up to a reprobate sense, and to send judgments upon a nation, and therefore the conservators of the publick peace are concerned to restrain it, by punishing it. (2.) He looked upon it as a much greater affront to the God of heaven, and no less than high treason against his crown and dignity; for *I should have denied the God that is above*, denied his being as God, and his sovereignty as God above. Idolatry is atheism in effect; hence the Gentiles are said to be without God (atheists) in the world. Note, We should be afraid of every thing that doth but implicitly deny the God above, his providence, or any of his perfections.

3. He protests, that he was so far from doing or designing mischief to any, that he neither desired nor delighted in the hurt of the worst enemy he had. The forgiving of those that do us evil, it seems was old testament duty. Look how the Pharisees came to lose it, who taught, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy*, Mat. v. 43. Observe here,

(1.) Job was far from revenge. He did not only not return the injuries that were done him, not only not destroy those that hated him; but (1.) He did not so much as rejoice when any mischief befel them, *ver. 29.* Many that would not wilfully hurt those who stand in their light, or have done them a diskindness, yet are secretly pleased, and laugh in their sleeve (as we say) when hurt is done them: But Job was not of that spirit. Tho' Job was a very good man, yet it seems there were those that hated him, but evil found them. He saw their destruction, and was far from rejoicing in it, for that would justly have brought the destruction upon him, as it is intimated, *Prov. xxiv. 17, 18.* (2.) He did not so much as wish in his own mind that evil might befall them, *ver. 30.* He never wished a curse to his soul; and curses to the soul are the worst of curses, never desired his death; he knew if he did, it would turn into sin to him. He was careful not to offend with his tongue, *Psal. xxxix. 1.* would not suffer his mouth to sin, and therefore durst not imprecate any evil, no not to his worst enemy. If others bear malice to us, that will not justify us in bearing malice to them.

2. He was violently urged to revenge, and yet he kept himself thus clear from it, *ver. 31.* *The men of his tabernacle*, his domesticks, his servants, and those about him, were so enraged at Job's enemy that hated him, that they could have eaten him, if Job would but have set them on, or given them leave. *O that we had of his flesh!* Our master is satisfied to forgive them, but we cannot be so satisfied. See how well beloved Job was by his family, how heartily they espoused his cause, and what enemies they were to his enemies; but see what a strict hand Job kept upon his passions, that he would not revenge himself, tho' he had those about him that blew the coals of his resentment. Note, A good man commonly doth not lay the affronts that are done him so much to heart himself, as his friends do for him. 2. Great men have commonly those about them that stir them up to revenge. David had so, 1 *Sam. xxiv. 4.—xxvi. 8.* 2 *Sam. xvi. 9.* But if they keep their temper, notwithstanding the spiteful insinuations of those about them, afterwards it shall be no grief of heart to them, but shall turn very much to their praise.

4. He protests that he had never been unkind or unhospitable to strangers, *ver. 32.* *The stranger lodged not in the street*, as angels might lately have done in the streets of Sodom, if Lot alone had not entertained them: Perhaps by that instance Job was taught (as we are, *Heb. xiii. 2.*) not to be forgetful to entertain strangers. He that is at home, must consider those that are from home, and put his soul into their souls stead, and then do as he would be done by. Hospitality is a christian duty, 1 *Pet. iv. 9.* Job in his No. xxxvii.

prosperity was noted for good house-keeping: *He opened his door to the road.* So it may be read, he kept the street-door open, that he might see who passed by, and invited them in, as Abraham, *Gen. xviii. 1.*

33. If I covered my transgressions, as Adam: by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom: 34. Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me: that I kept silence, and went not out of the door? 35. O that one would hear me! behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book. 36. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. 37. I would declare unto him the number of my steps, as a prince would I go near unto him. 38. If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain: 39. If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life: 40. Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

We have here Job's protestation against three more sins, together with his general appeal to God's bar, and his petition for a hearing there, which, it is likely, was intended to conclude his discourse, (and therefore we will consider it last) but that another particular sin occurred, from which he thought it requisite to acquit himself. He clears himself from the charge,

1. Of dissimulation and hypocrisy, which was the general crime his friends accused him of: That under the cloke of a profession of religion, he had kept up secret haunts of sin, and that really he was as bad as other people, but had the art of concealing it: Zophar insinuated this, *chap. xx. 12.* that he *hid his iniquity under his tongue*; no, saith Job, that I never did, *ver. 33.* *I never covered my transgression as Adam*, never palliated a sin with frivolous excuses, nor made fig-leaves the shelter of my shame, nor ever *hid my iniquity in my bosom*, as a fondling, a darling, that I could by no means part with, or as stolen goods which he dreaded the discovery of. It is natural to us to cover our sins; we have it by kind from our first parents; we are loth to confess our faults, willing to extenuate them, and make the best of our selves, to devolve the blame upon others, as Adam on his wife, not without a tacit reflection upon God himself: But *he that thus covers his sins shall not prosper*, *Prov. xxviii. 13.* Job in this protestation intimates two things, which were certain evidences of his integrity, (1.) That he was not guilty of any great transgression or iniquity, inconsistent with sincerity, which he had now industriously concealed: In this protestation he had dealt fairly, and while he denies some sins, was not conscious to himself that he allowed himself in any. (2.) That what transgression and iniquity he had been guilty of, (as *who is there that lives and sins not?*) he had always been ready to own it, and as soon as ever he perceived he had said or done amiss, he was ready to unsay it, and undo it as far as he could by repentance, confessing it both to God and man, and forsaking it: And this is doing honestly.

2. From the charge of cowardise and base fear. His courage in that which is good, he produceth as an evidence of his sincerity in it, *ver. 34.* *Did I fear a great multitude, that I kept silence?* No, all that knew Job, knew him to be a man of undaunted resolution in a good cause, that boldly appeared, spoke and acted in defence of religion and justice, and did not fear the face of man, nor was ever threatned or brow-beaten out of his duty, but set his face as a flint. Observe, (1.) What great conscience Job had made of his duty as a magistrate, or a man of reputation in the place where he lived. He did not, he durst not keep silence, when he had a call to speak in an honest cause, nor keep within doors, when he had a call to go abroad to do good. The case may be such, as that it may be our sin to be silent and retired, as when we are called to reprove sin, and bear our testimony against it, to vindicate the truths and ways of God, to do right to those who are injured or oppressed, or any way to serve the publick, or do honour to our religion. (2.) What little account Job made of the discouragements he met with in the way of his duty. He valued not the clamours of the mob, feared not a great multitude, nor did he value the menaces of the mighty; the contempt of families never terrified him. He was not deterred by the number or quality, the scorns or insults, of the injurious from doing justice to the injured; no, he scorned to be swayed and biased by any such considerations, nor ever suffered a righteous cause to be run down by a high hand. He feared the great God, not the great multitude, and his curse, not the contempt of families.

3. From the charge of oppression and violence, and doing wrong to his poor neighbours. And here observe,

1. What his protestation is: That the estate he had, he both got and used honestly, so that his land could not cry out against him, nor the furrows thereof complain, *ver. 38.* as they do against those who get the possession of them by fraud and extortion, *Hab. ii. 9, 10, 11.* The whole creation is said to groan under the sin of man, but that which is unjustly gained and held, cries out against

against a man, and accuseth him, condemns him, and demands justice against him for the injury. Rather than his oppression shall go unpunished, the very ground and the furrows of it shall witness against him, and be his prosecutors. Two things he could say safely concerning his estate, (1.) That he *never eat the fruits of it without money*, ver. 39. What he purchased he paid for, as Abraham, for the land he bought, *Gen. xxiii. 16.* and David, *2 Sam. xxiv. 24.* The labourers that he employed had their wages duly paid them, and if he made use of the fruits of those lands that he let out, he paid his tenants for them, or allowed it in their rent. (2.) That he never caused the owners thereof to lose their life, never got an estate, as Ahab got Naboth's vineyard, killing the heir and seizing the inheritance; never starved those that held lands of him, nor killed them with hard bargains, and hard usage. No tenant, no workman, no servant, he had could complain of him.

2. How he confirms his protestation: he doth it as often before with a suitable imprecation, ver. 40. If I have got my estate unjustly, *let thistles grow instead of wheat*; the worst of weeds instead of the best of grains. When men get estates unjustly, they are justly deprived of the comfort of them, and disappointed in their expectations from them: they sow their land, but they sow not that body that shall be: God will give it a body; it was sown wheat, but shall come up thistles. What men do not come honestly by will never do them any good.

Job towards the close of his protestation appeals to the judgment-seat of God concerning the truth of it, ver. 34, 35, 36. *O that he would hear me, even that the Almighty would answer me!* This was what he often desired, and often complained that he could not obtain; and now he had drawn up his own defence so particularly, he leaves it upon record, in expectation of a hearing, files it as it were, until his cause be called.

1. A trial is moved for, and the motion earnestly pressed; *O that one, any one, would hear me*, my cause is so good, and my evidence so clear, that I am willing to refer it to any indifferent person whatsoever: but my desire is that the Almighty himself would determine it. An upright heart doth not dread a scrutiny: he that means honestly wishes he had a window in his breast that all men might see the intents of his heart. But an upright heart doth particularly desire to be determined in every thing by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth. It was holy David's prayer, *Search me O God, and know my heart*, and it was blessed Paul's comfort, *he that judgeth me is the Lord*.

2. The prosecutor is called, the plaintiff summoned and ordered to bring in his information, to say what he has to say against the prisoner, for he stands upon his deliverance. *O that mine adversary had written a book!* That my friends, who charge me with hypocrisy, would draw up their charge in writing, that it might be reduced to a certainty, and that we might the better join issue upon it. Job would be very glad to see the libel, to have a copy of his indictment; he would not hide it under his arm, but take it upon his shoulder, to be seen and read of all men, nay, he would bind as a crown to him, would be pleased with it, and look upon it as his ornament. For, (1.) If it discovered to him any sin he had been guilty of which he did not yet see, he should be glad to know it that he might repent of it, and get it pardoned. A good man is willing to know the worst by himself, and will be thankful to those that will faithfully tell him of his faults. (2.) If it charge him with what was false, he doubted not but to disprove the allegations; that his innocency would be cleared up as the light, and he should come off with so much the more honour. But, (3.) He did believe that when his adversaries came to consider the matter so closely; as they must do if they put the charge in writing, the accusations would be trivial and minute, and every one that saw them would say, if this was all they had to say against him, it was a shame they had given him so much trouble.

3. The defendant is ready to make his appearance, and to give his accusers all the fair play they can desire.

He will declare unto them the number of his steps, ver. 37. He will let them into the history of his own life, will shew them all the stages and scenes of it; he will give them a narrative of his conversation, what would make against him as well as what would make for him, and let them make what use they pleased of it: and so confident he is of his integrity, that as a prince to be crowned, rather than as a prisoner to be tried, he would go near to him, both to his accuser to hear his charge, and to his judge to hear his doom. Thus the testimony of his conscience was his rejoicing. *Hic murus abeneus esto, nil conscire sibi.* Those that have kept their hands without spot from the world; as Job did, may lift up their faces without spot unto God; and may comfort themselves with the prospect of his judgment when they lie under the unjust censures of men. *If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.*

And thus the words of Job are ended, *i. e.* He has now said all he would say in answer to his friends: he afterwards said something in a way of self-reproach and condemnation, chap. xl. 4, 5.—xlii. 2, &c. but here ends what he had to say in a way of self-defence and vindication. If this suffice not, he will say no more, he knows when he hath said enough, and will submit himself to the judgment of the bench. Some think the manner of expression intimates that he concluded with an air of assurance and triumph. He now keeps the field, and doubts not but to

win the field. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies.*

C H A P. XXXII.

The stage is clear, for Job and his three friends are set down, and neither he nor they have any thing more to say; it is therefore very seasonable for a moderator to interpose, and Elihu is the man: in this chapter we have, (1.) Some account of him, his parentage, his presence at this dispute, and his sentiments concerning it, ver. 1—5. (2.) The apology he made for his bold undertaking to speak to a question, which had been so largely and learnedly argued by his seniors. He pleads, (1.) That tho' he had not the experience of an old man, yet he had the understanding of a man, ver. 6—10. (2.) That he had patiently heard all they had to say, ver. 11—13. (3.) That he had something new to offer, ver. 14—17. (4.) That his mind was full of this matter; and it would be a refreshment to him to give it vent, ver. 18—20. (5.) That he was resolved to speak impartially, ver. 21, 22. And he did speak so well to this matter, that Job made no reply to him, and God gave him no rebuke, when he checked both Job himself and his other three friends.

1. **S**O these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. 3. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. 4. Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. 5. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.

Usually young men are the disputants, and old men the moderators: but here old men were the disputants, as a rebuke to them for their unbecoming heat, a young man is raised up to be the moderator. Divers of Job's friends were present, that came to visit him, and to receive instruction. Now here we have,

1. The reason why his three friends were now silent: they ceased to answer him, and let him have his saying, because he was righteous in his own eyes, that was the reason they gave why they said no more, because it was to no purpose to argue with a man that was so opinionative, ver. 1. Those that are self-conceited, are indeed hard to be wrought upon, there is more hopes of a fool (a fool of God's making) than of them, (who are fools of their own making) *Prov. xxvi. 11.* But they did not judge fairly concerning Job: he was really righteous before God, and not righteous only in his own eyes; so that it was only to save their own credit that they made this the reason of their silence, as peevish disputants commonly do when they find themselves run a-ground, and are not willing to own themselves unable to make their part good.

2. The reasons why Elihu the fourth now spoke. His name Elihu signifies *my God is he*: they had all tried in vain to convince Job, but *my God is he* that can and will do it, and did it at last: none but he can open the understanding. He is said to be a Buzite, from Buz; Nahor's second son, *Gen. xxii. 21.* and of the kindred of Ram, *i. e.* Aram; so some; *Gen. xxii. 21.* from whence the Syrians or Aramites descended and were denominated. Of the kindred of Abram; so the Chaldee paraphrase; supposing him to be first called Ram, high, then Abram, a high father, and lastly Abraham, the high father of a multitude: Elihu was not so well known as the rest, and therefore is more particularly described thus.

1. Elihu spoke because he was angry, and thought he had good cause to be so. When he had made his remarks upon the dispute, he did not go away and calumniate the disputants, striking them secretly with a malicious censorious tongue, but what he had to say he would say it before their faces, that they might vindicate themselves if they could.

(1.) He was angry at Job, because he thought he did not speak so reverently of God as he ought to have done; and that was too true, ver. 2. *He justified himself more than God*, *i. e.* He took more care and pains to clear himself from the imputation of unrighteousness in being thus afflicted, than to clear God from the imputation of unrighteousness in afflicting him, as if he were more concerned for his own honour than for God's; whereas he should in the first place have justified God, and cleared his glory; and then he might well enough have left his own reputation to shift for itself. Note, A gracious heart is jealous for the honour of God, and cannot but be angry, when that is neglected or postponed; or any injury done it. Nor is it any breach of the law of meekness to be angry at our friends when they are offensive to God: *get thee behind me, Satan*, saith Christ to Simon. Elihu owned Job to be a good man; and yet would not say as he

said, when he thought he said amiss: it is too great a compliment to our friends not to tell them of their faults.

(2.) He was angry at his friends because they thought he had not carried it so charitably towards Job as they ought to have done, *ver. 3.* *They had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.* They had adjudged him to be an hypocrite, and a wicked man, and would not recede from that sentence concerning him, and yet they could not prove him so, nor disprove the evidences he produced of his integrity. They could not make good the premises, and yet held fast the conclusion. They had no reply to make to his arguments, and yet they would not yield, but, right or wrong, would run him down, and this is not fair. There is seldom any quarrel begun, and more seldom carried on to that length than this was, but there is a fault on both sides: Elihu, as became a moderator, took part with neither, but was equally displeased with the mistakes and mismanagement of both. Those that in good earnest seek for truth, must thus be impartial in their judgments concerning the contenders, and not reject what is true and good on either side, for the sake of what is amiss, nor approve or defend what is amiss for the sake of what is true and good, but must learn to separate between the precious and the vile.

2. Elihu spoke because he thought it was time to speak, and that now at length it was come to his turn, *ver. 4, 5.* (1.) He had waited on Job's speeches, had patiently heard him out, until the words of Job were ended. (2.) He had waited on his friends silence; so that as he would not interrupt him, so he would not prevent them; not because they were wiser than he, but because they were elder than he, and therefore it was expected by the company that they should speak first, and Elihu was very modest, and would by no means offer to abridge them of their privilege. Some certain rules of precedency must be observed for the keeping of order; tho' inward real honour will attend true wisdom and worth, but because every man will think himself or his friend the wisest and worthiest, that can be no certain rule for the outward ceremonial honour, which therefore must attend the seniority either of age or office: and this respect the seniors may the better require because they paid it when they were juniors, and the juniors may the better pay, because they shall have it when they come to be seniors.

6. And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, *I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion.* 7. *I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.* 8. *But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* 9. *Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.* 10. *Therefore I said, Harken to me, I also will shew mine opinion.* 11. *Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst you searched out what to say.* 12. *Yea, I attended unto you: and behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words:* 13. *Left ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man.* 14. *Now he hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches.*

Elihu here appears to be,

1. A man of great modesty and humility: tho' a young man, and of pregnant parts, yet not pert and confident, and assuming: his face shone, and, like Moses, he did not know it, which made it shine so much the brighter. Let it be observed by all, especially by young people, as worthy their imitation. (1.) What a diffidence he had of himself, and of his own judgment, *ver. 6.* *I am young, and therefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion,* for fear I should either prove mistaken, or do that which was unbecoming me. He was so observant of all that passed, and applied his mind so close to what he heard, that he had formed in himself a judgment of it; he neither neglected it as foreign, nor declined it as intricate: but how clear soever the matter was to himself he was afraid to deliver himself upon it, because he differed in his sentiments from those that were elder than he. Note, It becomes us to be suspicious of our own judgment in matters of doubtful disputation, to be swift to hear the sentiments of others, and slow to speak our own, especially when we go contrary to the judgment of those whom upon the score of their learning and piety we justly have a veneration for. (2.) What a deference he paid to his seniors, and what great expectations he had from them, *ver. 7.* *I said, days should speak.* Note, Age and experience give a man great advantage in judging of things, both as they furnish a man with so much the more matter for his thoughts to work upon, and as they ripen and improve the faculties he is to work with; which is a good reason why old people should take pains both to learn themselves; and to teach others, else the advantages of their age are a reproach to them: and why young people should attend on their instructions: it is good *lodging with an old disciple*, Acts xxi. 16. Tit. ii. 4.

Elihu's modesty appeared in the patient attention he gave to what his seniors said, *ver. 11, 12.* He waited for their words as one that expected much from them, agreeable to the opinion he had of these grave men. He gave ear to their reasons, that he might take their meaning, and fully understand what was the drift of their discourse, and what the force of their arguments: yea, he attended to them with diligence and care: and this, (1.) Tho' they were slow, and took up a deal of time in searching out to what to say: tho' they were often to seek for matter and words, paused and hesitated, and were unready at their work, yet he overlooked that, and gave ear to their reasons, which if really convincing, he would not think the less so, for the disadvantages of the delivery of them. (2.) Tho' they trifled and made nothing of it, tho' they none of them answered Job's words, nor said what was proper to convince him, yet he attended to them in hopes they would bring it to some head at last. Many a time we must be willing to hear what we do not like, else we cannot prove all things. His patient attendance on their discourses he pleads, (1.) As that which entitled him to a liberty of speech in his turn, and empowered him to require their attention. *Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.* They that have heard may speak, and they that have learned may teach. (2.) As that which enabled him to pass a judgment upon what they had said: he had observed what they drove at, and therefore knew what to say to it. Let us be thoroughly apprised of the sentiments of our brethren before we censure them, for *he that answers a matter before he hears it*, or when he has heard it but by the halves, it is folly and shame to him, and speaks him both impertinent and impetuous.

2. He appears to have been a man of great sense and courage, and one that knew as well when and how to speak, as when and how to keep silence. Tho' he had so much respect to his friends as not to interrupt them with his speaking, yet he had so much regard to truth and justice (his better friends) as not to betray them by his silence. He boldly pleads,

1. That man is a rational creature, and therefore every man hath for himself a judgment of discretion, and ought to be allowed a liberty of speech in his turn. He means the same that Job did, *chap. xii. 3.* *But I have understanding as well as you.* When he saith, *ver. 8.* *But there is a spirit in man*, only he expresseth it a little more modestly, that one man has understanding as well as another, and no man can pretend to have the monopoly of reason, or to engross all the trade of it. Had he meant I have revelation as well as you, (as some understand it) he must have proved it, but if he mean only *I have reason as well as you*, they cannot deny it, for it is every man's honour, and it is no presumption to claim it, nor could they gainsay his inference from it, *ver. 10.* *Therefore hearken to me.* Learn here, (1.) That the soul is a spirit, neither material itself, nor doth it depend upon matter, but is capable of conversing with things spiritual, which are not the objects of sense. (2.) It is an understanding spirit. It is able to discover and receive truth, to discourse and reason upon it, and to direct and rule accordingly. (3.) This understanding spirit is in every man: it is the light that lighteth every man, *John i. 9.* (4.) It is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us this understanding spirit; for he is the father of spirits, and fountain of understanding. See *Gen. ii. 7. Eccl. xii. 7. Zech. xii. 1.*

2. That those who are advanced above others in grandeur and gravity do not always proportionably go beyond them in knowledge and wisdom, *ver. 9.* *Great men are not always wise:* it is pity but they were; for then they would never do hurt with their greatness, and would do so much the more good with their wisdom. Men should be preferred for their wisdom, and those that are in honour and power have most need of wisdom, and have the greatest opportunity of improving in it, and yet it doth not follow that great men are always wise, and therefore it is folly to subscribe to the dictates of any with an implicit faith. The aged do not always understand judgment, even they may be mistaken, and therefore must not expect to bring every thought into obedience to them: nay, therefore they must not take it as an affront to be contradicted, but rather take it as a kindness to be instructed by their juniors: *therefore I said, hearken to me*, *ver. 10.* We must be willing to hear reason from those that are every way inferior to us; and to yield to it. He that has a good eye can see further upon level ground, than he that is purblind can from the top of the highest mountain. *Better is a poor and wise child, than an old and foolish king*, Eccl. iv. 13.

3. That it was requisite something should be said for the settling of this controversy in a true light, which by all that had hitherto been said was but rendered more intricate and perplexed, *ver. 13.* *I must speak, lest ye should say; we have found out wisdom, lest you should think your argument against Job conclusive and irrefragable, and that Job cannot be convinced and humbled by any other argument, but this of yours, that God casteth him down and not man*, that it appears by his extraordinary afflictions that God is his enemy, and therefore he is certainly a wicked man; I must shew you that this is a false hypothesis; and that Job may be convinced without maintaining it. Or, lest you should think you have found out the wisest way, to reason no more with him; but leave it to God to thrust him down.

It is time to speak when we hear errors advanced and disputed for, especially under pretence of supporting the cause of God with them. It is time to speak when God's judgments are vouched for the patronizing of mens pride and passion, and their unjust uncharitable censures of their brethren, then we must speak on God's behalf.

4. That he had something new to offer, and would endeavour to manage the dispute in a better manner than it had hitherto been managed, *ver. 14.* He thinks he may expect a favourable hearing; for, (1.) He will not reply to Job's protestations of his integrity, but allows the truth of them, and therefore doth not interpose as his enemy. *He hath not directed his words against me:* I have nothing to say against the main of his discourse, nor do I differ from his principles. I have only a gentle reproof to give him for his passionate expressions. (2.) He will not repeat their arguments, nor go upon their principles; *neither will I answer him with your speeches:* not with the same matter; should I only say what has been said, I might justly be silenced as impertinent: nor in the same manner; I will not be guilty of that peevishness towards him my self, which I dislike in you. The controversy that has already been fully handled, a wise man will let alone, unless he can amend and improve what has been done; why should he *actum agere*, do that which has been done already?

15. They were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking. 16. When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more) 17. *I said,* I will answer also my part, I also will shew mine opinion. 18. For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. 19. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent, it is ready to burst like new bottles. 20. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips, and answer. 21. Let me not, I pray you, accept any mans person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. 22. For I know not to give flattering titles, *in so doing* my maker would soon take me away.

Three things here apologize for Elihu's interposing as he doth in this controversy, which had already been canvassed by such acute and learned disputants.

1. That the stage was clear, and he did not break in upon any of the managers on either side, *ver. 15.* *They were amazed,* *ver. 16.* *They stood still, and answered no more.* They not only left off speaking themselves, but they stood still, to hear if any of the company would speak their minds, so that (as we say) he had room and fair play given him. They seemed not fully satisfied themselves with what they had said, else they would have adjourned the court, and not have stood still, expecting what might further be offered. And therefore I said (*ver. 17.*) *I will answer also my part.* I cannot pretend to give a definitive sentence; no, the judgment is the Lord's, and by him it must be determined who is in the right, and who is in the wrong; but since you have each of you shewed your opinion, I also will shew mine, and let it take its fate with the rest. When what is offered, even by the meanest, is offered thus modestly, it is pity but it should be fairly heard and considered.

I see no inconvenience in supposing that Elihu here discovers himself to be the penman of this book; and that he here writes as an historian, relating the matter of fact, that after he had bespoke their intention in the foregoing verses; they were amazed, they left off whispering among themselves, did not gain say the liberty of speech he desired, but stood still to hear what he would say, being much surprised at the admirable mixture of boldness and modesty that appeared in his preface.

2. That he was uneasy, and even in pain, to be delivered of his thoughts upon this matter. They must give him leave to speak, for he cannot forbear; while he is *musing the fire burns*, *Psal. xxxix. 3.* *Shut up in his bones,* as the prophet speaks, *Jer. xx. 9.* Never did nurse when her breasts were gorged, so long to have them drawn, as Elihu did to deliver his mind concerning Job's case, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* If any of the disputants would have hit that which he thought was the right joint, he would contentedly have been silent, but when he thought they all missed it, he was undone to be trying his hand at it. He pleads, (1.) That he had a great deal to say; I am full of matter; having made my remarks upon all that has hitherto been said, and taken rise from it for my own thoughts. When aged men are drawn dry, and have spent their stock in discoursing of the divine providence, God can raise up others, even young men, and fill them with matter, for the edifying of his church, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted, tho' they that speak to it may. (2.) That he was under a necessity of saying it. The spirit within me not only instructs me what to say, but puts me on to say it; so that if I have not vent, (such a mighty ferment are my thoughts in) I shall burst like bottles of new wine, when it is working, *ver. 19.* See what a great grief it is to a good minister to be silenced, and thrust into a corner: he is full of matter, full of Christ, full of heaven, and would speak of these things

for the good of others, but he may not. (3.) That it would be an ease and satisfaction to himself to deliver his mind, *ver. 20.* *I will speak that I may be refreshed;* not only that I may be eased of the pain of stifling it, but that I may have the pleasure of endeavouring according to my place, and capacity, to do good. It is a great refreshment to a good man, to have liberty to speak for the glory of God, and the edification of others.

3. That he was resolved to speak with all possible freedom and sincerity, what he thought was true, not what he thought would please, *ver. 21, 22.* *Let me not accept any man's person,* as partial judges do that aim to enrich themselves, not to do justice; I am resolved to flatter no man. He would not speak otherwise than he thought, either, (1.) In compassion to Job, because he was poor and in affliction; would not make his case better than he really took it to be for fear of increasing his grief: but let him bear it as he can, he shall be told the truth. Those that are in affliction must not be flattered, but dealt faithfully with: when trouble is upon any, it is foolish pity to suffer sin upon them too, (*Lev. xix. 17.*) for that is the worst addition that can be to their trouble. Thou shalt not countenance, no more than discountenance a poor man in his cause, *Exod. xxiii. 3.* nor regard a sad look any more than a big look, so as for the sake of it to pervert justice, for that is knowing faces. Or, (2.) In compliment to Job's friends, because they were in prosperity and reputation. Let him not expect he should say as they said, any further than he was convinced they said right, nor applaud their dictates for the sake of their dignities; no, tho' Elihu is a young man, and upon his preferment, he will not dissemble truth to court the favour of great men: it is a good resolution he has taken up, *I know not to give flattering titles to men;* I never used my self to that language; and it is a good reason he gives for that resolution; *in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.* It is good to keep ourselves in awe with a holy fear of God's judgments: he that made us will take us away in his wrath, if we do not carry ourselves as we should. He hates all dissimulation and flattery, and will soon put lying lips to silence, and cut off flattering lips, *Psal. xii. 3.* The more closely we eye the majesty of God, as our Maker, and the more we dread his wrath and justice, the less danger shall we be in of a sinful fearing, or flattering of men.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Pompous prefaces oftentimes, like the teeming mountain, introduce but poor performances: but Elihu's discourse here, doth not disappoint the expectations which his preface had raised: it is substantial and lively, and very much to the purpose. He had in the foregoing chapter, said what he had to say to Job's three friends; and now he comes up close to Job himself, and directs his speech to him. (1.) He bespeaks Job's favourable acceptance of what he should say, and desires he would take him for that person whom he had so often wished for, that would plead with him, and receive his plea on God's behalf, *ver. 1—7.* (2.) He doth in God's name bring an action against him, for words, which in the heat of disputation he had spoken, reflecting upon God as dealing hardly with him, *ver. 8—11.* (3.) He endeavours to convince him of his fault and folly herein, by shewing him, (1.) God's sovereign dominion over man, *ver. 12, 13.* (2.) The care God takes of man, and the various ways and means he useth, to do his soul good, which we have reason to think he designs, when he lays bodily afflictions upon him, *ver. 14.* (1.) Job had sometimes complained of unquiet dreams, *chap. vii. 14.* Why, saith Elihu, God sometimes speaks conviction and instruction to men by such dreams, *ver. 15—18.* (2.) Job had especially complained of his sicknesses and pains; and as to these, he shews largely, that they were so far from being tokens of God's wrath, as Job took them, or evidences of Job's hypocrisy, as his friends took them, that they were really wise and gracious methods, which divine grace took for the increase of his acquaintance with God, to work patience, experience, and hope, *ver. 19—30.* And, lastly, he concludes with a request to Job, either to answer him, or give him leave to go on, *ver. 31—33.*

1. **W**herefore Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. 2. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth. 3. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. 4. The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. 5. If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up. 6. Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. 7. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.

Several arguments Elihu here useth to perswade Job not only to give him a patient hearing, but to believe that he designed him a good

good office; and to take it kindly, and be willing to receive the instructions he was now about to give him. Let Job consider,

1. That Elihu doth not join with his three friends against him: he hath in the foregoing chapter declared his dislike of their proceedings, disclaimed their hypothesis, and quite set aside the method they took of healing Job. Wherefore, Job, *I pray thee, hear my speech*, ver. 1. They were all in the same song, all spoke in the same strain; but I am trying a new way, *therefore hearken to all my words*, and not to some of them only; for we cannot judge of a discourse, unless we take it entire, and hearken to it all.

2. That he intended to make a solemn business of it, not to put in a word by the by, or give a short repartee to shew his wit, but after long silence, *he opened his mouth*, ver. 2. with deliberation and design; upon mature consideration, he had already begun to speak, and was prepared to go on, if Job would encourage him by his attention.

3. That he was resolved to speak as he thought, and not otherwise, ver. 3. *My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart*, the genuine product of my convictions and sentiments. There was reason to suspect, that Job's three friends did not think in their consciences, that Job was so ill a man as they had in their discourses represented him to be, merely for the support of their hypothesis, and that was not fair: It is a base thing to condemn those with our tongues, to serve a turn, whom, at the same time, we cannot but in our consciences think well of: Elihu is an honest man, and scorns to do so.

4. That what he said should be easy and not dark, and hard to be understood: *My lips shall utter knowledge clearly*: Job shall readily take his meaning, and find what he drives at. Those that speak of the things of God, should carefully avoid all obscurity and perplexedness, both of notion and expression, and speak as plainly and clearly as they can; for by that it will appear that they do themselves understand what they speak of, that they mean honestly, and design the edification of those they speak to.

5. That he would in his discourse, make the best use he could of the reason and understanding God had given him, that life, that rational soul, which he received from the spirit of God, and the breath of the Almighty, ver. 4. He owns himself unfit to enter into the lists with his seniors, yet he desires they will not despise his youth, for he is God's workmanship as well as they, made by the same hand, endued with the same noble powers and faculties, and designed for the same great end, and therefore why may not the God that made him, make use of him as an instrument of good to Job? With this consideration also we should quicken our selves (and perhaps Elihu made that use of it) to do good in our places, according to our capacity; God has made us, and given us life, and therefore we should study to use our life to some good purpose, to spend it in glorifying God, and serving our generation according to his will, that we may answer the end of our creation, and it may not be said, we were made in vain.

6. That he would be very willing to hear what Job could object against what he had to say, ver. 5. *If thou canst answer me*: If thou hast so much strength and spirit left thee, and are not quite spent with the distemper; *set thy words in order*, and they shall have their due consideration. Those that can speak reason, will hear reason.

7. That he had often wished for one that would appear for God, with whom he might freely expostulate, and to whom, as arbitrator, he might refer the matter, and such a one Elihu would be, ver. 6. *I am according to thy wish, in God's stead*. How pathetically had Job wished, chap. xvi. 21. *O that one might plead for a man with God!* and chap. xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him*; only he would make in his bargain, that his dread should not make him afraid, chap. xiii. 21. Now, saith Elihu, look upon me this once, as in God's stead; I will undertake to plead his cause with thee, and to shew thee wherein thou hast affronted him, and what he has against thee; and what appeals, or complaints, thou hast to make to God, make them to me.

8. That he was not an unequal match for him. *I also am formed out of the clay*. I also as well as the first man, Gen. ii. 7. I also as well as thou. Job had urged this with God, as a reason why he should not bear hard upon him, chap. x. 9. *Remember that thou hast made me as the clay*; why, saith Elihu, I am formed out of the clay, as well as thou, *formed of the same clay*, so some read it. It is good for us all to consider that we are formed out of the clay; and well for us it is, that those who are to us in God's stead are so; that he speaks to us by men like our selves, according to Israel's wish, upon a full trial, Deut. v. 24. God has wisely deposited the treasure in vessels earthen, like our selves, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

Lastly, That he would have no reason to be frightened at the assault he made upon him, ver. 7. *My terror shall not make thee afraid*. (1.) As thy friends have done with their arguings, I will not fall so foul upon thee as they have done, nor draw up such a heavy charge against thee. Nor, (2.) As God would do, if he should appear to reason with thee: I stand upon the same level with thee, and am made of the same mold, and therefore cannot impress that terror upon thee, which thou mayst justly dread from the appearance of the divine majesty. If we would rightly convince men, it must be by reason, not by terror, by fair arguing, not by a heavy hand.

No. xxxvii.

8. Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, 9. I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. 10. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy. 11. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths. 12. Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. 13. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.

In these verses,

1. Elihu particularly chargeth Job with some indecent expressions that had dropped from him, reflecting upon the justice and goodness of God, in his dealings with him. He doth not ground the charge upon report, but was himself an ear-witness of what he here reproves him for, ver. 8. *Thou hast spoken it in my hearing*, and in the hearing of all this company. He had it not at second hand; if so, he would have hoped it had not been so bad as it was represented: He did not hear it from Job, in private conversation; then he would not have been so ill-bred as to repeat it thus publicly; but Job had said it openly, and therefore it was fit he should be openly reprov'd for it. Them that sin before all, rebuke before all. When we hear any thing said, that tends to God's dishonour, we ought publicly to bear our testimony against it: What is said amiss in our hearing, we are concerned to reprove, for *ye are my witnesses*, saith the Lord, to confront the accuser.

(1.) Job had represented himself as innocent, ver. 9. *Thou hast said, I am clean without transgression*; Job had not said this *totidem verbis*; nay, he had owned himself to have sinned, and to be impure before God; but he had indeed said, *Thou knowest that I am not wicked: My righteousness I hold fast*, and the like, on which Elihu might ground this charge. It was true, that Job was a perfect and an upright man, and not such a one as his friends had represented him; but he ought not to have insisted so much upon it, as if God had therefore done him wrong in afflicting him: Yet it should seem, Elihu did not deal fairly in charging Job with saying, that he was clean and innocent from all transgression, when he only pleaded, that he was upright and innocent from the great transgression: But those that speak passionately and unwarily, must thank themselves if they be misunderstood; they should have taken more care.

(2.) He had represented God as severe in marking what he did amiss, and taking all advantages against him, ver. 10, 11. as if he lay at catch to pick quarrels with him. *He findeth occasions against me*: Which supposeth seeking them; to this purpose Job had spoken, chap. xiv. 16, 17. *Dost thou not watch over my sin? He counteth me for his enemy*. So he had expressly said, chap. xiii. 24.—xix. 11. *He putteth my feet in the stocks*; that as I cannot contend with him, so I may not be able to flee from him; this he had said, chap. xiii. 27. *And that he marketh my paths*, in the same place.

2. He endeavours to convince him that he had spoken amiss in speaking thus, and that he ought to humble himself before God for it, and by repentance to unlay it, ver. 12. *Behold, in this thou art not just*. Here thou art not in the right, so some read it. See the difference between the charge which Elihu exhibited against Job, and that which was preferred against him by his other friends; they would not own that he was just at all, but Elihu only saith, in this; in saying this, thou art not just. (1.) Thou dost not deal justly with God: To be just, is to render to all their due; now, we do not render God his due, nor are we just to him, if we do not acknowledge his equity and kindness in all the dispensations of his providence towards us; that he is righteous in all his ways, and that however it be, yet he is good. (2.) Thou dost not speak the language of a righteous man; I do not deny but thou art such a one, but in this thou dost not make it to appear. Many that are just, yet in some particular instances do not speak and act like themselves; and as, on the one hand, we must not fail to tell, even a good man, wherein he mistakes and doth amiss, nor flatter him in his errors and passions, for in that we are not kind; so, on the other hand, we must not draw mens characters, nor pass a judgment on them by one instance, or some few misplaced words, for in that we are not just. In many things we all offend, and therefore must be candid in our censures.

Two things Elihu proposeth to Job's consideration, to convince him that he had said amiss.

1. That God is infinitely above us, and therefore it is madness to contend with him, for if he plead against us with his great power, we cannot stand before him. *I will answer thee*, saith Elihu, in one word, which carries its own evidence along with it, *That God is greater than man*; no doubt he is infinitely greater: Between God and man there is no proportion. Job had himself said a great deal, and admirably well, concerning the greatness of God, his irresistible power, and inconceivable sovereignty, his terrible majesty, and unfathomable immensity: Now, (saith Elihu) do but consider what thou thy self hast said concerning the greatness of God, and apply it to thy self: If he is greater than man, he is greater than me, and thou wilt see reason enough to repent of these

ill-natured, ill-favoured reflections upon him, and to blush at thy folly, and tremble to think of thine own presumption. Note, There is enough in this one plain unquestionable truth, *That God is greater than man*, if duly improved, for ever to put to silence and put to shame, all our complaints of his providence, and our exceptions against his dealings with us. He is not only more wise and powerful than we are, and therefore it is to no purpose to contend with him, who will be too hard for us, but more holy, just, and good, for these are the transcendent glories and excellencies of the divine nature; in these God is greater than man, and therefore it is absurd and unreasonable to find fault with him, for he is certainly in the right.

2. That God is not accountable to us, *ver. 13. Why dost thou strive against him?* Those that complain of God strive against him, implead him, impeach him, bring an action against him: And why do they do so? For what cause? To what purpose? Note, It is an unreasonable thing for us, weak, foolish, sinful, creatures, to strive with a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. Wo to the clay that strives with the potter: *For he gives no account of any of his matters.* He is under no obligation, to shew us a reason for what he doth, neither to tell us what he designs to do; in what method, at what time, by what instruments; nor to tell us why he deals thus with us: He is not bound either to justify his own proceedings, or to satisfy our demands and enquiries; his judgments will certainly justify themselves; if we do not satisfy our selves in them, it is our own fault: It is therefore daring impiety for us to arraign God at our bar, or challenge him to shew cause for what he doth, to say unto him, *What dost thou?* Or, *Why dost thou so?* He giveth not account of all his matters; so some read it: He reveals as much as it is fit for us to know, as follows here, *ver. 14.* But still there are secret things which belong not to us, which it is not for us to pry into.

14. For God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not. 15. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbrings upon the bed: 16. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, 17. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. 18. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

Job had complained, that God kept him wholly in the dark, concerning the meaning of his dealings with him; and therefore concluded he dealt with him as his enemy: No, saith Elihu, he speaks to you, but you do not perceive him; so that the fault is yours, not his; and is designing your real good, even in those dispensations which you put this harsh construction upon. Observe in general, *ver. 14.*

1. What a friend God is to our welfare, *He speaketh to us once, yea, twice.* It is a token of his favour, that notwithstanding the distance and quarrel between us and him, yet he is pleased to speak to us: It is an evidence he designs our good, that he is pleased to speak to us of our own concerns, to shew us what is our duty, and what our interest, what he requires of us, and what we may expect from him; to tell us of our faults, and warn us of our danger; to shew us the way, and to lead us in it: This he doth once, yea, twice, *i. e.* Again and again; when one warning is neglected, he gives another, not willing that any should perish; *Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.* And so it is, that sinners may be left inexcusable.

2. What enemies we are to our own welfare? *Man perceives it not, i. e.* He doth not heed it or regard it; he doth not discern or understand it; is not aware that it is the voice of God, nor doth he receive the things revealed; for they are foolishness to him; he stops his ear, stands in his own light, rejects the counsel of God against himself, and so is never the wiser, no not for the dictates of wisdom itself.

God speaks to us by conscience, by providences, and by ministers, of all which Elihu here discourseth at large, to shew Job, that God was both telling him his mind, and doing him a kindness, even now he seemed to keep him in the dark, and so treat him as a stranger, and to keep him in distress, and so treat him as an enemy. There was not then, that we know of, any divine revelation in writing, and therefore that is not here mentioned among the ways by which God speaketh to men, tho' now it is the principal way. In these verses he shews how God teacheth and admonisheth the children of men by their own consciences. Observe,

1. The proper season and opportunity for these admonitions, *ver. 15. In a dream—in slumbrings upon the bed,* when men are retired from the world, and the business and conversation of it; then is a good time for them to retire into their own hearts, and commune with them when they are upon their beds, solitary and still, *Psal. iv. 4.* And that time God takes for dealing personally with men, (1.) When he sent angels, extraordinary messengers on his errands, he commonly chose that time for the delivery of them; when by deep sleep falling on men, the bodily senses were all locked up, and the mind more free to receive the immediate commu-

nications of divine light: Thus he made his mind known to the prophets by visions and dreams, *Numb. xlii. 6.* thus he warned Abimelech, *Gen. xx. 3.* Laban, *Gen. xxxi. 24.* Joseph, *Mat. i. 21.* Thus he made known to Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, things that should come to pass hereafter. (2.) When he stirred up conscience, that ordinary deputy of his, in the soul, to do its office; he took that opportunity, either when deep sleep fell on men, for tho' dreams mostly come from fancy, some may come from conscience: Or, in slumbrings, when men are between sleep and wake, reflecting at night upon the business of the foregoing day, or projecting in the morning the business of the ensuing day, then is a proper time for their hearts to reproach them for what they have done ill, and to admonish them what they should do, See *Isa. xxx. 21.*

2. The power and force with which those admonitions come, *ver. 16.* When God designs mens good, by the convictions and dictates of their own consciences, (1.) He gives them the letting in, and makes them to be heeded; *then he opens the ears of men,* which were before shut against the voice of this charmer, *Psal. lviii. 5.* He opens the heart, as he opened Lydia's, and so opens the ears: He takes away that which stopped the ear, so that the conviction finds, or forceth, its way; nay, he works in the soul a submission to the regimen of conscience, and a compliance with its rules, for that follows upon God's opening the ear, *Isa. l. 6. God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious.* (2.) He gives them the setting on, and makes them to abide, he sealeth their instruction, *i. e.* The instruction that is designed for them, and is suited to them, this he makes their souls to receive the deep and lasting impression of, as the wax of the seal: When the heart is delivered into divine instructions, as into a mould, then the work is done.

3. The end and design of these admonitions, that are sent.

1. To keep men from sin, and particularly the sin of pride; *ver. 17. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, i. e.* from his evil purposes; may change the temper of his mind, and the course of his life, his disposition and inclination, or prevent some particular sin he is in danger of falling into: May withdraw man from his work; may make him leave off man's work, which is working for the world and the flesh, and may set him to work the work of God. Many a man has been stopped in the full career of a sinful pursuit, by the seasonable checks of his own conscience, saying, *Do not this abominable thing, which the Lord hates.* Particularly, God doth by this means hide pride from man, *i. e.* hide those things from him, which are the matter of his pride, and take his mind off from dwelling upon them, by setting before him what reason he has to be humble: That he may take away pride from man, so some read it; that he may pluck up that root of bitterness, which is the cause of so much sin. All those whom God has mercy in store for, he will humble and hide pride from. Pride makes people eager and resolute in the prosecution of their purposes, they will have their way, therefore God withdraws them from their purposes, by mortifying their pride.

2. To keep men from ruin, *ver. 18.* While sinners are pursuing their evil purposes, and indulging their pride, their souls are hastening apace to the pit, to the sword, to destruction both in this world and that to come: But when God, by the admonitions of conscience, withdraws them from sin, he thereby keeps back their souls from the pit, from the bottomless pit, and saves them from perishing by the sword of divine vengeance, so iniquity shall not be their ruin. That which turns men from sin, saves them from hell, *saves a soul from death, Jam. v. ult.* See what a mercy it is to be under the restraints of an awakened conscience; faithful are the wounds, and kind are the bonds of that friend, for the soul is kept from perishing eternally.

19. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: 20. So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. 21. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen, stick out. 22. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. 23. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: 24. Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom. 25. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth. 26. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. 27. He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; 28. He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

God hath spoken once to sinners by their own consciences, to keep them from the paths of the destroyer, but they perceive it not; they are not aware that the checks their own hearts give them

them in a sinful way, are from God, but they are imputed to melancholy, or the preciseness of their education; and therefore God speaketh twice: Speaks a second time, and tries another way to convince and reclaim sinners, and that is by providences, afflictive and merciful, (in which he speaketh twice) and by the seasonable instructions of good ministers, setting in with them. Job complained much of his diseases, and judged by them that God was angry with him; his friends did so too, but Elihu shews they were all mistaken, for God often afflicts the body in love, and with gracious designs of good to the soul, as appears in the issue, which here it is brought to; and of great use this part of Elihu's discourse will be to us, for the due improvement of sickness, in and by which God speaketh to men. Here is,

1. The patient described in his extremity: See what work sickness makes, *ver. 19, &c.* when God sends it with commission; *Do this, and it doth it.*

(1.) The sick man is full of pain all over him, *ver. 14. He is chastened with pain upon his bed,* such pain as confines him to his bed; or, so extreme the pain is, that he can get no ease, no, not on his bed where he would repose himself: Pain and sickness will turn a bed of down into a bed of thorns, on which he that used to sleep, now tosseth to and fro till the dawning of the day. The case, as here put, is very bad; pain is more hardly born than sickness, and with that the patient here is chastened; not a dull heavy pain, but strong and acute; and many times the stronger the patient, the stronger the pain, for the more sanguine the complexion is, the more violent commonly the disease is. It is not the smarting of the flesh that is complained of, but the aking of the bones. It is an inward rooted pain; and not only the bones of one limb, but the multitude of the bones, are thus chastened. See what frail, what vile bodies we have, which, tho' receiving no external hurt, may be thus pained from causes within themselves; see what work sin makes, what mischief it doth: Pain is the fruit of sin; yet by the grace of God, the pain of the body is often made a means of good to the soul.

(2.) He has quite lost his stomach, the common effect of sickness, *ver. 20. His life abhorreth bread,* the most necessary food, and dainty meat, which he most delighted in, and formerly relished with a great deal of pleasure. This is a good reason why we should not be desirous of dainties, because they are deceitful meat, *Prov. xxiii. 3.* We may be soon made as sick of them, as we are now fond of them; and those who live in luxury when they are well, if ever they come, by reason of sickness, to loath dainty meat, may with grief and shame read their sin in their punishment. Let us not inordinately love the taste of meat, for the time may come when we may even loath the sight of meat, *Psal. cvii. 18.*

(3.) He is become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, *ver. 21.* By sickness, perhaps a few days sickness, his flesh which was fat, and fair and plump, is consumed away that it cannot be seen; it is strangely wasted and gone, and his bones, that were buried in flesh, now stick out; you may count his ribs, may tell all his bones. The soul that is well nourished with the bread of life, sickness will not make lean, but it soon makes a change in the body.

"He who before had such a beauteous air,
"And pamper'd with his ease, seem'd plump and fair;
"Doth all his friends (amazing change!) surprize,
"With pale lean cheeks, and ghastly hollow eyes;
"His bones, a horrid sight, start thro' his skin,
"Which lay before in flesh and fat, unseen.

Sir R. Blackmore.

(4.) He is given up for gone, and his life despaired of, *ver. 22. His soul draws near to the grave, i. e.* He has all the symptoms of death upon him, and in the apprehension of all about him, as well as in his own, he is a dying man. The pangs of death, here called the destroyers, are just ready to seize him; they compass him about, *Psal. cxvi. 3.* Perhaps it intimates the very dreadful apprehensions which those have of death as a destroying thing, when it stares them in the face, who, when it was at a distance, made light of it: All agree, when it comes to the setting to, whatever they thought of it before, that it is a serious thing to die.

2. The provision made for his instruction, in order to a sanctified use of his affliction, that when God in that way speaketh to man, he may be heard and understood, and not speak in vain, *ver. 23.* He is happy, if there be a messenger with him to attend him in his sickness, to convince, counsel, and comfort him, an interpreter to expound the providence, and give him to understand the meaning of it, a man of wisdom that knows the voice of the rod, and its interpretation; for many a time when God speaks by afflictions, we are so unversed in the language, that we have need of an interpreter; and it is well if we have such a one: The advice and help of a good minister is as needful and seasonable, and should be as acceptable in sickness, as of a good physician; especially if he be well skilled in the art of explaining and improving providences, which if he be, he is one of a thousand, and to be valued accordingly; and his business at such a time is to shew unto man his uprightness, *i. e.* God's uprightness, that in faithful-

ness he afflicts him, and doth him no wrong; which it is necessary we be convinced of, in order to our making a due improvement of the affliction: Or, rather man's uprightness, or rectitude: (1.) The uprightness that is: If it appear that the sick person is truly pious, the interpreter will not do, as Job's friends had done, make it his business to prove him an hypocrite, because he is afflicted; but, on the contrary, will shew him his uprightness, notwithstanding his afflictions, that he may take the comfort of it, and be easy whatever the event is. (2.) The uprightness, the reformation that should be, in order to life and peace. When men are made to see the way of uprightness to be the only way, and a sure way to salvation, and to chuse it, and walk in it accordingly, the work is done.

3. God's gracious acceptance of him upon his repentance, *ver. 24.* When he sees that the sick person is indeed convinced that sincere repentance, and that uprightness which is gospel-perfection, is his interest as well as duty, then he that waits to be gracious, and shews mercy upon the first indication of true repentance, is gracious unto him, and takes him into his favour and thoughts for good. Wherever God finds a gracious heart, he will be found a gracious God: And (1.) He will give a gracious order for his discharge: He saith, Deliver him, *i. e.* let him be delivered from going down to the pit, from that death which is the wages of sin: When afflictions have done their work, they shall be removed: When we return to God in a way of duty, he will return to us in a way of mercy. Those shall be delivered from going down to the pit, who receive God's messengers, and rightly understand his interpreters, so as to subscribe to his uprightness. (2.) He will give a gracious reason for this order, I have found a ransom, or propitiation; Jesus Christ is that ransom, so Elihu calls him, as Job had called him his redeemer, for he is both the purchaser and the price, the priest and the sacrifice; so high was the value put upon souls, that nothing less would redeem them, and so great the injury done by sin, that nothing less would atone for it than the blood of the Son of God, who gave his life a ransom for many. This is a ransom of God's finding, a contrivance of infinite wisdom; we could never have found it our selves, and the angels themselves could never have found it; it is the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom; and such an invention as is, and will be the everlasting wonder of those principalities and powers that desire to look into it. Observe how God glories in the invention here, (*εὕρηκα εὕρηκα*) I have found, I have found the ransom, I, even I, am he that have done it.

4. The recovery of the sick man hereupon. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease. When the patient becomes a penitent, see what a blessed change follows.

(1.) His body recovers its health, *ver. 25.* This is not always the consequent of a sick man's repentance and return to God, but sometimes it is; and recovery from sickness is then a mercy indeed, when it arises from the remission of sin, then it is in love to the soul, that the body is delivered from the pit of corruption, when God casts our sins behind his back, *Isa. xxxviii. 17.* That is the method of a blessed recovery; *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee,* and then rise, take up thy bed and walk, *Mat. ix. 2, 6.* So here, interest him in the ransom, and then his flesh shall be fresher than a child's, and there shall be no remains of his distemper, but he shall return to the days of his youth, to the beauty and strength which he had then; when the distemper that oppressed nature is removed, how strangely doth nature help it self, in which the power and goodness of the God of nature must be thankfully acknowledged! By such merciful providences as these, which afflictions give occasion for, God speaketh once, yea twice, to the children of men, letting them know (if they would but perceive it) their dependence upon him, and his tender compassion of them.

(2.) His soul recovers its peace, *ver. 26.* (1.) The patient being a penitent, is a suppliant, and has learned to pray; he knows God will be sought unto for his favours, and therefore he shall pray unto God, pray for pardon, pray for health: *Is any afflicted? any sick? let him pray.* When he finds himself recovering, he shall not then think that prayer is no longer necessary, for we need the grace of God as much for the sanctifying of a mercy, as for the sanctifying of an affliction. (2.) His prayers are accepted. God will be favourable to him, and be well pleased with him, his anger shall be turned away from him, and the light of God's countenance shall shine upon his soul; and then it follows, (3.) That he has the comfort of communion with God, he shall now see the face of God, which before was hid from him, and he shall see it with joy, for what sight can be more reviving? (See *Gen. xxiii. 10. As tho' I had seen the face of God.*) All true penitents rejoice more in the returns of God's favour, than in any instance whatsoever, of prosperity or pleasure, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* (4.) He has a blessed tranquillity of mind, arising from the sense of his justification before God, who will render unto this man his righteousness: He shall receive the atonement, *i. e.* the comfort of it, *Rom. v. 11.* Righteousness shall be imputed to him, and peace thereupon spoken, the joy and gladness of which he shall then be made to hear, tho' he could not hear it in the day of his affliction. God will now deal with him as a righteous man, with whom it shall be well. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness, *Psal. xxiv. 5.* God shall give him grace to go and sin no

more. Perhaps, this may speak the reformation of his life after his recovery: As he shall pray unto God, whom before he slighted, so he shall render to man his righteousness, whom before he had wronged, shall make restitution, and for the future do justly.

5. The general rule which God will go by, in dealing with the children of men, inferred from this instance, *ver.* 27, 28. As sick people upon their submission are recovered, so all others that truly repent of their sins, shall find mercy with God. See here, (1.) What sin is, and what reason we have not to sin. Would we know the nature of sin, and the malignity of it? It is the perverting of that which is right; it is a most unjust, unreasonable thing, it is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator, the usurped dominion of the flesh over the spirit, and a contradiction to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil: It is *perverting the right ways of the Lord*, *Acts* xiii. 10. and therefore the ways of sin are called crooked ways, *Psal.* cxxv. ult. Would we know what is to be got by sin? *It profiteth us not*. The works of darkness are unfruitful works, when profit and loss come to be balanced, all the gains of sin, put them all together, will come far short of countervailing the damage. All true penitents are ready to own this, and it is a mortifying consideration, *Rom.* vi. 21. *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* (2.) See what repentance is, and what reason we have to repent. Would we approve our selves true penitents? we must then with a broken and contrite heart confess our sins to God, *1 John* i. 9. Confess the fact of sin; I have sinned, and not deny the charge, or stand upon our own justification; confess the fault of sin, the iniquity, the dishonesty of it, I have perverted that which was right: The folly of sin, so foolish have I been and ignorant, for it profited me not: and therefore what have I to do any more with it? And is there not good reason why we should make such a penitent confession as this? for (1.) God expects it: He looks upon men when they have sinned, to see what they will do next, whether they will go on in it, or whether they will bethink themselves and return. He hearkens and hears whether any say, *what have I done?* *Jer.* viii. 6. He looks upon sinners with an eye of compassion, desiring to hear this from them, for he has no pleasure in their ruin. He looks upon them, and as soon as he perceives these workings of repentance in them, he encourageth them, and is ready to accept them, *Psal.* xxxii. 4, 5. as the father went forth to meet the returning prodigal. (2.) It will turn to our unspeakable advantage. The promise is general; if any humble themselves thus, whoever they are, 1. They shall not come into condemnation, but be saved from the wrath to come. *He shall deliver his soul from going into the pit*, the pit of hell; iniquity shall not be his ruin. 2. They shall be happy in everlasting life and joy: *His life shall see the light*, i. e. all good, in the vision and fruition of God. To obtain this bliss, if the prophet had bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? how much more, when he only saith unto us, *wash and be clean* confess and be pardoned, repent and be saved.

29. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, 30. To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. 31. Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me, hold thy peace, and I will speak. 32. If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee. 33. If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

We have here the conclusion of this first part of Elihu's discourse, in which,

1. He briefly sums up what he had said, shewing that God's great and gracious design in all the dispensations of his providence towards the children of men, is to save them from being for ever miserable, and bring them to be for ever happy, *ver.* 29, 30. All these things God is working with the children of men, dealing with them, by conscience, by providences, by ministers, by mercies, by afflictions, makes them sick and makes them well again; all these are his operations: He hath *set the one over against the other*, *Eccles.* vii. 14. but his hand is in all; it is he that performeth all things for us. All providences are to be looked upon as God's workings with man, his strivings with him. He useth variety of methods to do men good; if one affliction do not do the work, he will try another; if neither do, he will try a mercy; will send a messenger to interpret both: He works such things as these oftentimes, twice, thrice; so it is in the original, referring to *ver.* 14. *He speaketh once, yea, twice*; if that prevail not, he worketh twice, yea, thrice; changes his method, we have piped, we have mourned, returns again to the same method, repeats the same applications: And why doth he take all this pains with man? It is *to bring back his soul from the pit*, *ver.* 30. If God did not take more care of us than we do of our selves, we were miserable; we would destroy our selves, but he would have us saved, and deviseth means by his grace, to undo that by which we were undoing our selves. The former method by dream and vision was to *keep back the soul from the pit*, *ver.* 18. i. e. to prevent sin, that we might not fall into it: This by sickness, and the word is to bring back the

soul, to recover those that have fallen into sin; that they may not lie still and perish in it. And all that by repentance are brought back from the pit, it is that they may be enlightened with the light of the living, that they may have present comfort and everlasting happiness. Whom God saves from sin and hell, which are darkness, he will bring to heaven the inheritance of the saints in light; and this he aims at, this he drives at in all his institutions, and all his dispensations. *Lord, what is man that thou shouldst thus visit him!* This should engage us to comply with God's designs, to work with him for our own good, and not to counter-work him: And this will render those that perish for ever inexcusable, that so much was done to save them, and they would not be healed.

2. He bespeaks Job's acceptance of what he had offered, and begs of him to *mark it well*, *ver.* 31. What is intended for our good, challengeth our regard. And if Job will observe what is said, (1.) He is welcome to make what objections he can against it, *ver.* 32. *If thou hast any thing to say for thy self, in thine own vindication, answer me*; tho' I am fresh, and thou art spent, I will not run thee down with words, *Speak, for I desire to justify thee*, and am not as thy other friends that desired to condemn thee: Elihu contends for truth, not as they did, for victory. Note, Those we reprove, we should desire to justify, and be glad to see them clear themselves from the imputations they lie under, and therefore give them all possible advantage and encouragement to do it. (2.) If he has nothing to say against what is said, Elihu lets him know that he has something more to say, which he desires him patiently to attend to, *ver.* 33. *Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom*. Those that would both shew wisdom, and learn wisdom, must hearken and keep silence, be swift to hear, and slow to speak. Job was wise and good, but those that are so, may yet be wiser and better, and must therefore set themselves to improve by the means of wisdom and grace.

C H A P. XXXIV.

Elihu, it is likely, paused a while, to see if Job had any thing to say against his discourse in the foregoing chapter; but he sitting silent, and, it is likely, intimating his desire that he would go on, he here proceeds. And (1.) He bespeaks not only the audience, but the assistance of the company, *ver.* 2—4. (2.) He chargeth Job with some more indecent expressions, that had dropped from him, *ver.* 5—9. (3.) He undertakes to convince him that he had spoken amiss, by shewing very fully, (1.) God's incontestible justice, *ver.* 10, 12, 17, 19, 23. (2.) His sovereign dominion, *ver.* 13—15. (3.) His almighty power, *ver.* 20, 24. (4.) His omniscience, *ver.* 21, 22, 25. (5.) His severity against sinners, *ver.* 26—28. (6.) His over-ruling providence, *ver.* 29, 30. (4.) He teacheth him what he should say, *ver.* 31, 32. And then, lastly, he leaves the matter to Job's own conscience, and concludes with a sharp reproof of him, for his peevishness and discontent, *ver.* 33—37. And all this Job not only bore patiently, but took kindly, because he saw Elihu meant well; and whereas his other friends had accused him of that from which his own conscience acquitted him, Elihu charged him with that only for which, it is probable, his own heart, now upon the reflection, began to smite him.

1. **F**urthermore Elihu answered and said, 2. Hear my words, O ye wise men, and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. 3. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. 4. Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among our selves what is good. 5. For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. 6. Should I lye against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression. 7. What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? 8. Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men. 9. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.

Here, (1.) Elihu humbly addresseth himself to the auditors, and endeavours, like an orator, to gain their good will, and their favourable attention. (1.) He calls them wise men, and men that had knowledge, *ver.* 2. It is comfortable dealing with such as understand sense: *I speak as to wise men*, who can judge what I say? *1 Cor.* x. 15. Elihu differed in opinion from them, and yet he calls them wise and knowing men: Peevish disputants think all fools that are not of their mind; but it is justice we owe to those who are wise, to acknowledge it, tho' our sentiments do not agree with theirs. (2.) He appeals to their judgment, and therefore submits to their trial, *ver.* 3. The ear of the judicious tries words, whether what is said be true or false, right or wrong, and he that speaks must stand the test of the intelligent. As we must prove all things we hear, so we must be willing what we speak should be proved. (3.) He takes them in partners with him in the examination and discussion of this matter, *ver.* 4. He doth not pretend to be sole dictator, nor undertake to say what is just and good, and what is not, but he is willing to join with them in searching

searching it out, and desires a consultation: Let us agree to lay aside all animosities and feuds, all prejudices and affectation of contradiction, and all stiffness in adhering to the opinion we have once espoused, and let us choose to our selves judgment; let us fix right principles on which to proceed, and then take right methods for finding out truth; and let us know among our selves, by comparing notes, and communicating our reasons, what is good, and what is otherwise. Note, We are then likely to discern what is right, when we agree to assist one another in searching it out.

2. He warmly accuseth Job for some passionate words which he had spoken, that reflected on the divine government, appealing to the house, whether he ought not to be called to the bar, and checked for them.

1. He recites the words which Job had spoken, as near as he can remember. (1.) He had insisted upon his own innocency; Job hath said, *I am righteous*, ver. 5. and when urged to confess his guilt, has stiffly maintained his plea of Not guilty. *Should I lie against my right?* ver. 6. Job had spoken to this purpose, chap. xxvii. 6. *My righteousness I hold fast*. (2.) He had charged God with injustice in his dealings with him, that he had wronged him in afflicting him, and had not righted him; *God has taken away my judgment*; so Job had said, chap. xxvii. 2. (3.) He had despaired of relief, and concluded that God could not, or would not, help him, my wound is incurable, and likely to be mortal, and yet without transgression; *not for any injustice in my hand*, chap. xvi. 16, 17. (4.) He had in effect said, that there is nothing to be got in the service of God, and that no man will be the better at last for his religion, ver. 9. *He hath said that which gives occasion to suspect that he thinks, It profiteth a man nothing that he shall delight himself with God*. It is granted that there is a present pleasure in religion, for what is it but to delight our selves with God? in communion with him, in concurrence with him, in walking with him as Enoch did; this is a true notion of religion, and speaks its ways to be pleasantness: And yet the advantage of it is denied, as if it were *vain to serve God*, Mal. iii. 14. This Elihu gathers as Job's opinion, by an innuendo from what he said, chap. ix. 22. *He destroys the perfect and the wicked*, which has a truth in it, for all things come alike to all, but it was ill expressed, and gave too much occasion for this imputation, and therefore Job sat down silent under it, and attempted not his own vindication; whence Mr. Caryl well observes, That good men sometimes speak worse than they mean: And that a good man will rather bear more blame than he deserves, than stand to excuse himself when he hath deserved any blame.

2. He chargeth Job very high upon it. In general, *what man is like Job?* ver. 7. Did you ever know such a man as Job, or ever hear a man talk at such an extravagant rate? He represents him (1.) As sitting in the seat of the scornful: *He drinketh up scorning like water*, i. e. he takes a great deal of liberty to reproach both God and his friends, takes a pleasure in it, and is very liberal in his reflections. Or, he is very greedy in receiving and hearkening to the scorns and contempts which others cast upon their brethren, is well pleased with them, and cries them up. Or, as some explain it, by these foolish expressions of his he makes himself the object of scorn, lays himself very open to reproach, and gives occasion to others to laugh at him; while his religion suffers by it, and the reputation of that is wounded thro' his side. We have need to pray that God will never leave us to our selves, to say or do any thing which may *make us a reproach to the foolish*, Psal. xxxix. 8. (2.) As walking in the course of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners. *He goes in company with the workers of iniquity*, ver. 8. not that in his conversation he did associate with them, but in his opinion he did favour and countenance them, and strengthen their hand. If (as it follows, ver. 9. for the proof of this) *it profits a man nothing to delight himself in God*, why should he not lay the reins in the neck of his lusts, and herd himself with the workers of iniquity? He that saith, he hath *cleansed his hands in vain*, doth not only offend against the generation of God's children, Psal. lxxiii. 13, 14. but gratifies his enemies, and faith as they say.

10. Therefore, hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, *that he should do wickedness*, and from the Almighty, *that he should commit iniquity*. 11. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. 12. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. 13. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world? 14. If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; 15. All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

The scope of Elihu's discourse is to reconcile Job to his afflictions, and to pacify his spirit under them: In order to this, he had shewed in the foregoing chapter that God meant him no hurt in afflicting him, but intended it for his spiritual benefit. In No. xxxvii.

this chapter he shews that he did him no wrong in afflicting him; nor punished him more than he deserved: If the former could not prevail to satisfy him, yet this ought to silence him. In these verses he directs his discourse to all the company; *Hearken, to me, ye men of understanding*, (ver. 10.) and shew your selves to be intelligent, by assenting to this which I say. And this is that which he saith, that the righteous God never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures, but his ways are equal, ours are unequal.

The truth here maintained, is the justice and equity of all God's proceedings. Now observe in these verses,

1. How plainly this truth is laid down, both negatively and positively. (1.) He doth wrong to none: *God cannot do wickedness*, nor *the Almighty commit iniquity*, ver. 10. It is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, and so it is also with the purity of his will, ver. 12. *God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment*. He neither can, nor will do an ill thing, nor deal hardly with any man. He will never inflict the evil of punishment, but where he finds the evil of sin, nor in any undue proportion, for that would be to commit iniquity, and do wickedly. If appeals be made to him, or he be to give a definitive sentence, he will have an eye to the merits of the cause, and not respect the person, for that were to pervert judgment. He will never either do any man wrong, or deny any man right, but *the heavens will shortly declare his righteousness*. Because he is God, and therefore is infinitely perfect and holy, he can neither do ill himself, nor countenance it in others, no more than he can either die, or lye, or deny himself. Tho' he be Almighty, yet he never useth his power, as mighty men often do, for the support of injustice. He is Shaddai, God all-sufficient, and therefore he cannot be *tempted with evil*, (Jam. i. 13.) to do an unrighteous thing. (2.) He ministers justice to all, ver. 11. *The work of a man shall he render unto him*. Good works shall be rewarded, and evil works either punished or satisfied for; so that sooner or later, in this world, or in that to come, he will cause every man to find according to his ways. This is the standing rule of distributive justice, to give to every man according to his work, *Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him*. If services persevered in now go unrewarded, and sins persisted in now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming, when God will fully render to every man according to his works, with interest for the delay.

2. How warmly it is asserted: (1.) With an assurance of the truth of it; yea, surely, ver. 12. It is a truth which none can deny, or call in question, it is what we may take for granted, and are all agreed in, that God will not do wickedly. (2.) With an abhorrence of the very thought of the contrary, ver. 10. *Far be it from God that he should do wickedness*, and from us that we should imagine such a thing, that we should entertain the least suspicion of it, or say any thing that looks like charging him with it.

3. How evidently it is proved, by two arguments.

1. His independent absolute sovereignty and dominion, ver. 13. *Who hath given him a charge over the earth*, and deputed him to manage the affairs of men, upon the earth? Or, who but he hath disposed the whole world of mankind? He hath the sole administration of the kingdoms of men, and has it of himself, nor is he intrusted with it by or for any other. (1.) It is certain the government is his, and he doth according to his will in all the hosts both of heaven and earth; and therefore he is not to be charged with injustice; for *shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 25. How shall God either rule or judge the world, if there be, or could be, any *unrighteousness with him?* Rom. iii. 5, 6. He that is entitled to such an unlimited power, must certainly have in himself an unspotted purity. This is also a good reason why we should acquiesce in all God's dealings with us: Shall not he that disposeth of the whole world, dispose of us and our concerns? (2.) It is as certain that he doth not derive his power from any, nor is it a dispensation that is committed to him, but his power is original, and, like his being, of himself; and therefore, if he were not perfectly just, all the world and the affairs of it would soon be in the utmost confusion: The highest powers on earth have a God above them to whom they are accountable, because it is not far from them to do iniquity. But therefore God has none above him, because it is not possible he should do any thing (such is the perfection of his nature) that should need to be controlled. And if he be an absolute sovereign, we are bound to submit to him, for there is no higher power to which we may appeal, so that the virtue is a necessity.

2. His irresistible power, ver. 14. If he set his heart upon man, to contend with him, much more if (as some read it) he set his heart against man, to ruin him, if he should deal with man either by meer sovereignty, or by strict justice, (either by *summa potestas*, or *summum jus*) there were no standing before him; man's spirit and breath would soon be gone, and *all flesh would perish together*, ver. 15. Many mens honesty is owing purely to their impotency, they do not do wrong, because they cannot support it when it is done, or it is not in their power to do it: But God is able to crush any man, easily, and suddenly, and yet doth not by arbitrary power crush any man, which therefore must be attributed to the infinite perfection of his nature, and that is immutable.

See here (1.) What God can do with us, he can soon bring us to dust, there needs not any positive act of his omnipotence to do it, if he do but withdraw that concurrence of his providence by which we live, if he gather unto himself that spirit and breath, which was from his hand at first, and is still in his hand, we expire immediately like an animal in an air-pump; when the air is exhausted. (2.) What he may do with us, without doing us any wrong: He may recal the being he gave, of which we are but tenants at will, and which also we have forfeited, and therefore, as long as that is continued of his meer favour, we have no reason to cry out of wrong, whatever other comforts are removed.

16. If now *thou hast* understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words. 17. Shall even he that hateth right, govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just? 18. *Is it fit* to say to a king, *Thou art wicked?* and to princes, *Ye are ungodly?* 19. *How much less* to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands. 20. In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand. 21. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. 22. *There is no darkness*, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. 23. For he will not lay upon man more *than right*; that he should enter into judgment with God. 24. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead. 25. Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth *them* in the night, so that they are destroyed. 26. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others: 27. Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways. 28. So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted. 29. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth *his* face, who then can behold him? whether *it be done* against a nation, or against a man only: 30. That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.

Elihu here applies himself more directly to Job: He had spoken to the rest, *ver. 10.* as men of understanding; now speaking to Job, he puts an *if* upon his understanding: *If thou hast understanding*, hear this, and observe it, *ver. 16.*

1. Hear this, That God is not to be quarrelled with for any thing that he doth: It is daring presumption to arraign and condemn God's proceedings, as Job had done by his discontents. It was (1.) As absurd, as it would be to advance one to power that is a professed enemy to justice: *Shall even he that hateth right govern*, *ver. 17.* The righteous Lord so loveth righteousness, that, in comparison with him, even Job himself, tho' a perfect and upright man, might be said to hate right, and shall he govern? Shall he pretend to direct God, or correct what he doth? Shall such unrighteous creatures as we are, give law to the righteous God? Or, must he take his measures from us? When we consider the corruption of our nature, and the contrariety there is in us to the eternal rule of equity, we cannot but see it an impudent impious thing for us to prescribe to God. (2.) It was as absurd, as it would be to call a most righteous, innocent person to the bar, and to give judgment against him, tho' it appeared never so plain upon the trial, that he was most just. *Wilt thou condemn him that is righteous in all his ways*, and cannot but be so? (3.) It is more absurd and unbecoming than it would be, to say to a sovereign prince, *Thou art wicked*, and to judges upon the bench, *Ye are ungodly*, *ver. 18.* This would be looked upon as an insufferable affront to majesty, and to magistracy; no king, no prince, would bear it: In favour of government, we presume it is a right sentence that is passed, unless the contrary be very evident; but whatever we think, it is not fit to tell a king to his face, that he is wicked: Nathan reprov'd David by a parable; or whatever a high-priest or a prophet might do, it is not for an ordinary subject to make so bold with the powers that are: How absurd is it then to say so to God! To impute iniquity to him, who having no respect of persons, is in no temptation to do an unjust thing, *ver. 19.* *He regardeth not the rich more than the poor*, and therefore it is fit he should rule, and it is not fit we should find fault with him. Note, Rich and poor stand upon the same level before God: A great man shall fare never the better, nor find any favour, for his wealth and greatness; nor shall a poor man fare ever the worse for his poverty, nor an honest cause be starved: Job, now he was poor, should have as much favour with God, and be as much regarded by him as when he was rich; for they all are the work of his hands: Their persons are so; the poor are made by the same hand, and of the same mold with the rich: Their conditions are so; the poor were made poor by the divine

providence, as well as the rich made rich; and therefore the poor shall fare never the worse for that which is their lot, not their fault.

2. Hear this, That God is to be acknowledged and submitted to in all that he doth. Divers considerations Elihu here suggests to Job, to beget in him great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him to knock under, and proceed no further in his quarrel with him.

1. God is almighty, and able to deal with the strongest of men, when he enters into judgment with them, *ver. 20.* even the people, the body of a nation, tho' never so numerous, shall be troubled, unhinged and put into disorder, when God pleaseth; even the mighty man, the prince, tho' never so honourable, never so formidable among men, yet if God speak the word, shall be taken away, out of his throne; nay, out of the land of the living; they shall die, they shall pass away: What cannot he do that has all the powers of death at his command? Observe the suddenness of this destruction, *In a moment shall they die.* It is not a work of time with God to bring down his proud enemies, but when he pleaseth it is soon done; nor is he bound to give them warning, no not an hour's warning; *This night thy soul shall be required.* Observe the season of it, they shall be troubled at midnight, when they are secure and careless, and unable to help themselves; as the Egyptians when their first-born were slain. And this is the immediate work of God, they are taken away, without hand, insensibly, by secret judgments; God can himself humble the greatest tyrant, without the assistance or agency of any man: Whatever hand he sometimes useth, in the accomplishing of his purposes, he needs none, but can do it without hand. Nor is it one single mighty man only that he can thus over-power, but even hosts of them, *ver. 24.* *He shall break in pieces mighty men without number*; for no combined power can stand it out against omnipotence: Yet when God destroys tyranny, he doth not design anarchy; if those are brought down that ruled ill, it doth not therefore follow, that people must have no rulers, for when he breaks mighty men, yet he sets others in their stead, that will rule better; or if they do not, he over-turns them also in the night, or in a night, so that they are destroyed, *ver. 25.* Witness Belshazzar. Or, if he designs them space to repent, he doth not presently destroy them, but *he strikes them as wicked men*, *ver. 26.* Some humbling mortifying judgments are brought upon them; these wicked rulers are stricken as other wicked men; as surely, as sorely stricken in their bodies, estates or families, and this for warning to their neighbours; the stroke is given *in terrorem*, and therefore is given in the open sight of others, that they also may see and fear, and tremble before the justice of God. If kings stand not before him, how shall we stand!

2. God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. As the strongest cannot oppose his arm, so the most subtle cannot escape his eye; and therefore if some are punished, either more or less than we think they should be, instead of quarrelling with God, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God only. For, (1.) Every thing is open before him, *ver. 22.* *His eyes are upon the ways of man*: Not only they are within reach of his eye, so that he can see them, but his eye is upon them, so that he actually observes and inspects them; he sees us all, and sees all our goings; go whether we will, we are under his eye; all our actions, good and evil, are regarded and recorded, and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened. (2.) Nothing is or can be concealed from him, *ver. 22.* *There is no darkness nor shadow of death*, so close, so thick, so solitary, so remote from light or sight, as that in it the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from the discovering eye, and avenging hand of the righteous God. Observe here, (1.) The workers of iniquity would hide themselves, if they could, from the eye of the world for shame, and that perhaps they may do from the eye of God for fear, as Adam among the trees of the garden; the day is coming when mighty men, and chief captains, will call to the rocks and mountains to hide them. (2.) They would gladly be hid even by the shadow of death, be hid in the grave, and lie for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. (3.) It is in vain to think of flying from God's justice, or absconding when his wrath is in pursuit of us. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God; *He knows their works*, *ver. 25.* both what they do, and what they design.

3. God is righteous, and in all his proceedings goes according to the rules of equity. Even then when he is overturning mighty men, and breaking them in pieces, yet *he will not lay upon man more than right*; *ver. 23.* As he will not punish the innocent, so he will not exact of those that are guilty more than their iniquities deserve; and of the proportion between the sin and the punishment infinite wisdom shall be the judge. He will not give any man cause to complain that he deals hardly with him, nor shall any man enter into judgment with God, or bring an action against him. If he do, God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. Therefore Job was very much to be blamed for his complaints of God, and is here well advised to let fall his action, for he would certainly be cast, or non-suited. *It is not for man ever to purpose to enter into judgment with the omnipotent*; so some read the whole verse. Job had often wished to plead

plead his cause before God; To what purpose, saith Elihu? the judgment already given concerning thee will certainly be affirmed; no errors can be found in it, nor any exceptions taken to it, but after all, it must rest as it is. All is well that God doth, and will be found so.

To prove that God when he destroys the mighty men, and strikes them as wicked men, yet doth not lay upon them more than right, he shews what their wickedness was, ver. 27, 28. and let any compare that with their punishment, and then judge whether they did not deserve it. In short, these unjust judges whom God will justly judge, neither feared God, nor regarded man, Luke xviii. 2. (1.) They were rebels to God: they turned back from him, cast off the fear of him, and abandoned the very thoughts of him, for they would not consider any of his ways, took no heed either to his precepts or to his providences, but lived without God in the world. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, they turn back from God; and it is because they do not consider, not because they cannot, but they will not. From inconsideration comes impiety, and from thence all immorality. (2.) They were tyrants to all mankind, ver. 28. They will not call upon God for themselves; but they cause the cry of the poor to come to him, and that cry is against them. They are injurious and oppressive to the poor, wrong them, crush them, impoverish them yet more, and add affliction to the afflicted, who cry unto God, make their complaint to him, and he hears them, and pleads their cause. Their case is bad that have the prayers and tears of the poor against them, for the cry of the oppressed will sooner or later draw down vengeance on the heads of the oppressors, and no one can say that this is more than right, Exod. xxii. 23.

4. God hath an uncontrollable dominion in all the affairs of the children of men, and so guides and governs whatever concerns both communities and particular persons, that as what he designs cannot be defeated, so what he doth cannot be changed, ver. 29. Observe, (1.) The frowns of all the world cannot trouble those whom God quiets with his smiles. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? Which is a challenge to all the powers of hell and earth to disquiet those to whom God speaks peace, and for whom he creates it. If God give outward peace to a nation, he can secure what he gives, and disable the enemies of it to give it any disturbance. If God gave inward peace to a man only, that quietness and everlasting assurance, which is the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan, nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor the arrests of death itself can give trouble. What can make them uneasy whose souls dwell at ease in God? See Phil. iv. 7. (2.) The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with his frowns: For if he in displeasure hide his face, and withhold the comfort of his favour, who then can behold him! i.e. Who can behold a displeased God so as to bear up under his wrath, or turn it away? Who can make him shew his face when he resolves to hide it, or see through the clouds and darkness which are round about him? Or, who can behold a disquieted sinner so as to give him effectual relief? Who can stand a friend to him to whom God is an enemy? None can relieve the distresses of the outward condition without God: If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I? 2 Kings vi. 27. Nor can any relieve the distresses of the mind against God and his terrors. If he impress the sense of his wrath upon a guilty conscience, all the comforts the creature can administer are ineffectual, as vinegar upon nitre, so are songs to a heavy heart. The irresistibleness of God's operations must be acknowledged in his dealings, both with communities, and with particular persons: What he doth cannot be controlled, whether it be done against a nation in its publick capacity, or against a man only in his private affairs: The same providence that governs mighty kingdoms, presides in the concerns of the meanest individual. And neither the strength of a whole nation can resist his power, nor the smallness of a single person evade the cognizance: but what he doth shall be done effectually and victoriously.

5. God is wise, and careful of the publick welfare, and therefore provides that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared, ver. 30. See here, (1.) The pride of hypocrites; they aim to reign; the praise of men and power in the world is their reward; it is what they aim at. (2.) The policy of tyrants; when they aim to set up themselves, they sometimes make use of religion as a cloke and cover for their ambition, and by their hypocrisy come to reign. (3.) The danger the people are in when hypocrites reign; they are likely to be ensnared in sin or trouble, or both. Power in the hands of dissemblers is oft destructive to the rights and liberties of a people, which they are more easily wheedled out of, than forced out of. And a great deal of mischief has been done likewise to the power of godliness, under the pretence of a form of godliness. (4.) The care which divine providence takes of the people to prevent this danger, that the hypocrite reign not; either that he do not reign at all, or that he do not reign long. If God has mercy in store for a people, he will either prevent the rise, or hasten the ruin of hypocritical rulers.

31. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more. 32. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. 33. Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose, and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest. 34. Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me. 35. Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom. 36. My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end, because of his answers for wicked men. 37. For he added rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands amongst us, and multiplieth his words against God.

In these verses,

1. Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction, ver. 31, 32. Having reprov'd him for his peevish passionate words, here he puts better words into his mouth: When we reprove for what is amiss, we must direct to what is good: Those are reproofs of instruction, Prov. vi. 23. He doth not impose it upon Job to use these words; but recommends it to him, as that which was meet to be said. And in general he would have him repent of his ill carriage and indecent expressions under his affliction. Job's other friends would have had him own himself an ill man, and by overdoing they undid: Elihu will oblige him only to own that he had in the management of this controversy spoken unadvisedly with his lips: Let us remember this in giving reproofs, and not make the matter worse than it is; for the stretching of the crime may defeat the prosecution: Elihu drives the right nail, and speeds accordingly. He directs Job,

(1.) To humble himself before God for his sins, and to accept the punishment of them. I have born chastisement. What I suffer comes justly upon me, and therefore I will hear it, and not only justify God in it, but acknowledge his goodness. Many are chastised that do not bear chastisement, do not bear it well, and so in effect do not bear it at all. Penitents, if sincere, will take all well that God doth, and will bear chastisement as a medicinal operation intended for good.

(2.) To pray to God to discover his sins to him, ver. 32. That which I see not, teach thou me. Lord, upon the review, I find much amiss in me, and much done amiss by me, but I have reason to fear there is much more that I am not aware of; greater abominations, which, thro' ignorance, mistake, and partiality to my self, I do not yet see; Lord, give me to see it, awaken my conscience to do its office faithfully. A good man is willing to know the worst by himself, and particularly under affliction desires to be told wherefore God contends with him, and what God designs in correcting him.

(3.) To promise reformation, ver. 31. I will not offend any more. And ver. 32. If I have done iniquity, (or seeing I have) I will do so no more; whatever thou shalt discover to me to have been amiss, by thy grace I will amend it for the future. This implies a confession that we have offended: True remorse and godly sorrow for the offence, and a humble compliance with God's design in afflicting us, which is to part between us and our sins. The penitent here compleats his repentance, for it is not enough to be sorry for our sins, but we must go and sin no more, and, as here, bind ourselves with the bond of a fixed resolution never more to return to folly. This is meet to be said in a steadfast purpose, and meet to be said to God in a solemn promise and vow.

2. He reasons with him concerning his discontent and uneasiness under his affliction, ver. 33. We are ready to think every thing that concerns us should be just as we would have it; but Elihu here shews, (1.) That it is absurd and unreasonable to expect it: should it be according to thy mind? No, what reason for that? Elihu here speaks with a great deference to the divine will and wisdom, and a satisfaction therein: It is highly fit every thing should be according to God's mind; and with a just disdain of the pretensions of those that are proud, and would be their own carvers: Should it be according to thy mind? Must we always have the good we have a mind to enjoy, we should then wrongfully encroach upon others, and foolishly ensnare our selves: Must we never be afflicted because we have no mind to it? Is it fit that sinners should feel no smart, that scholars should be under no discipline? Or if we must be afflicted, is it fit we should choose what rod we will be beaten with? No, it is fit every thing should be according to God's mind, and not ours, for he is the creator, and we are creatures; he is infinitely wise and knowing, we are foolish and short-sighted; he is in one mind, we are in many. (2.) That it is in vain, and to no purpose to expect it. He will recompense it whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose: God will take his own way, fulfil his own counsel, and recompense according to the sentence of his own justice, whether thou art pleased or displeased, he will neither ask thy leave, nor ask thy advice, but what he pleaseth that will he do; it is therefore thy wisdom to be easy, and make a virtue of necessity: Make the best of that which is, because it is out of thy

thy power to make it otherwise. If thou pretend to choose and refuse, *i. e.* to prescribe to God, and except against what he doth, so will not I, I will acquiesce in all he doth: and therefore speak what thou knowest, say what thou wilt do, whether thou wilt oppose or submit. The matter lies plain before thee; be at a point; thou art in God's hand, not in mine.

3. He appeals to all intelligent indifferent persons, whether there was not a great deal of sin and folly in that which Job said. (1.) He would have the matter thoroughly examined and brought to an issue, *ver. 36. My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end.* If any will undertake to justify what he has said, let them do it; if not, let us all agree to bear our testimony against it. Many understand it of his trial by afflictions, let his troubles be continued till he be thoroughly humbled, and his proud spirit brought down, till he be made to see his error, and to retract what he hath so presumptuously said against God and his providence. Let the trial be continued till the end be obtained. (2.) He appeals both to God and man, and desires the judgment of both upon it. 1. Some read, *ver. 36. as an appeal to God, O my father, let Job be tried.* So the margin of our bibles, for the same word signifies my desire and my father: And some suppose he lifted up his eyes when he said this, meaning, *O my Father which art in heaven,* let Job be tried till he be subdued. When we are praying for the benefit of afflictions either to our selves or others, we must eye God as a father, because they are fatherly corrections, and a part of our filial education, *Heb. xii. 7.* 2. He appeals to the by-standers, *ver. 34. Let men of understanding tell me, whether they can put any more favourable construction upon Job's words than I have put, and whether he has not spoken very ill, and ought not to cry peccavi.* In what Job had said, he thought it appeared, (1.) That he did not rightly understand himself, but had talked foolishly, *ver. 35.* He cannot say that Job is without knowledge and wisdom, but in this matter he hath spoken without knowledge, and whatever his heart is, his words were without prudence. What he said to his wife may be retorted upon himself; *He speaks as one of the foolish men speak,* and for the same reason, *shall we not receive evil as well as good at God's hand?* *chap. ii. 10.* Sometimes we need and deserve those reproofs our selves which we have given to others. Those that reproach God's wisdom, really reproach their own. (2.) That he had not a due regard to God, but had talked wickedly. If what he has said be tried to the end, *i. e.* if one would put it to the utmost stretch, and make the worst of it, it would be found, (1.) That he had taken part with God's enemies: His answers were for wicked men, *i. e.* what he had said tended to strengthen the hands, and harden the hearts of wicked people in their wickedness, he having carried the matter of their prosperity much further than he needed. Let wicked men, like Baal, plead for themselves if they will, but far be it from us that we should answer for them, or say any thing in favour of them. (2.) That he had insulted God's friends, and hector'd over them. *He clappeth his hands among us,* and if he be not thoroughly tried and humbled, will grow yet more insolent and imperious, as if he had gotten the day, and silenced us all. To speak ill is bad enough, but to clap our hands, and triumph in it when we have done, as if error and passion had won the victory, is much worse. (3.) That he spoke against God himself, and by standing to what he had said, *added rebellion to his sin.* To speak, though but one word against God, by whom we speak, and for whom we ought to speak, is a great sin; what is it then to multiply words against him, as if we would out-talk him? What is it to repeat them instead of unsaying them? Those that have sinned, and when they are called to repent, thus go on frowardly, add rebellion to their sin, and make it exceeding sinful. *Errare possum, Hæreticus esse nolo.*

CHAP. XXXV.

Job being still silent, Elihu follows his blow, and here a third time undertakes to shew him that he had spoken amiss, and ought to recant. Three ill sayings he here chargeth him with, and returns answer to them distinctly. (1.) He had represented religion as an indifferent, unprofitable thing, which God enjoins for his own sake, not for ours, the contrary to which Elihu makes out, ver. 1—8. (2.) He had complained of God as deaf to the cries of the oppressed, against which imputation Elihu here justifies God, ver. 9—13. (3.) He had despaired of the return of God's favour to him, because it was so long deferred, but Elihu shews him the true cause of the delay, ver. 14—16.

1. **E**LIHU spake moreover, and said, 2. Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than Gods? 3. For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee, and, What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin? 4. I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee. 5. Look unto the heavens, and see and behold the clouds which

are higher than thou. 6. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? 7. If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? 8. Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.

We have here,

1. The bad words which Elihu chargeth upon Job, *ver. 2, 3.* To evince the badness of them, he appeals to himself and his own sober thoughts in the reflection; *Thinkest thou this to be right?* This intimates, (1.) Elihu's confidence that the reproof he now gave was just, for he could refer the judgment of it even to Job himself. They that have truth and equity on their side sooner or later, will have every man's conscience on their side. (2.) His good opinion of Job, that he thought better than he spoke, and that though he had spoken amiss, yet when he perceived his mistake, he would not stand to it. What we have said in our haste that was not right, it becomes us to own that our second thoughts convince us that it was wrong.

Two things Elihu here reproves Job for:

(1.) For justifying himself more than God, which was the thing that first provoked him, *chap. xxxii. 2.* Thou hast in effect said, *My righteousness is more than God's,* *i. e.* I have done more for God than ever he did for me; so that when the accounts are balanced, he will be brought in debtor to me: As if Job thought his services had been paid less than they deserved, and his sins punished more than they deserved, which is a most unjust and wicked thought for any man to harbour, and especially to utter. When Job insisted so much upon his own integrity, and the severity of God's dealings with him, he did in effect say, *My righteousness is more than God's;* whereas, tho' we be never so good, and our afflictions never so great, we are chargeable with unrighteousness, and God is not.

(2.) For disowning the benefits and advantages of religion, because he suffers these things. *What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin?* *ver. 3.* This is gathered from *chap. ix. 30, 31. Though I make my hands never so clean,* and what the nearer am I? *Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch.* And *chap. x. 15. If I be wicked wo to me;* but if I be righteous, it is all one. The psalmist, when he compared his own afflictions with the prosperity of the wicked, was tempted to say, *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain,* *Psal. lxxiii. 13.* And if Job said so, he did in effect say, *My righteousness is more than God's,* *ver. 2.* for if he got nothing by his religion, God was more beholden to him than he was to God. But tho' there might be some colour for it, yet it was not fair to charge these words upon Job, when he himself had made them the wicked words of prospering sinners, *chap. xxi. 15. What profit shall we have if we pray to him?* and had immediately disclaimed them, *ver. 16. The counsel of the wicked is far from me.* It is not a fair way of disputing, to charge men with those consequences of their opinions, which they expressly renounce.

2. The good answer which Elihu gives to this, *ver. 4.* I will undertake to answer thee, and thy companions with thee, *i. e.* all those that approve thy sayings, and are ready to justify thee in them; and all others that say as thou sayest: I have that to offer which will silence them all. To do this he has recourse to his old maxim, *chap. xxxiii. 12. That God is greater than man.* That is a truth, which, if duly improved, will serve many good purposes, and this particularly to prove that God is debtor to no man. The greatest of men may be a debtor to the meanest, but such is the infinite disproportion between God and man, that the great God cannot possibly receive any benefit by man, and therefore cannot be supposed to lie under any obligation to man, for if he be obliged by his purpose and promise, it is only to himself. That is a challenge which no man can take up, *Rom. xi. 35. Who hath first given to God,* let him prove it, and it shall be recompensed to him again. Why should we demand it, as a just debt to gain by our religion, (as Job seemed to do) when the God we serve doth not gain by it?

1. Elihu needs not prove that God is above man; it is agreed by all, but he endeavours to affect Job and us with it, by an ocular demonstration of the height of the heavens, and the clouds, *ver. 5.* They are far above us, and God is far above them, how much then is he set out of the reach either of our sins, or of our services! *Look unto the heavens, and behold the clouds.* God made man to look upwards; *Cælumque tueri jussit.* Idolaters looked up to heaven, and worshipped the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, but we must look up to heaven, and worship the Lord of those hosts. They are higher than we, but God is infinitely above them. *His glory is above the heavens,* *Psal. viii. 1.* and the knowledge of him higher than heaven, *Job xi. 8.*

2. But from hence he infers that God is not affected, either one way or other, by any thing that we do.

1. He owns that men may be either bettered or damaged by what we do, *ver. 8. Thy wickedness, perhaps may, hurt a man*

as thou art, may occasion him trouble in his outward concerns; a wicked man may wound, or rob, or slander his neighbour, or may draw him into sin, and so prejudice his soul: Thy righteousness, thy justice, thy charity, thy wisdom, thy piety, may, perhaps, profit the son of man; our goodness extends to the saints that are in the earth, Psal. xvi. 3. To men like our selves we are in a capacity either of doing injury, or of shewing kindness. And in both these the sovereign Lord and Judge of all will interest himself, will reward those that do good, and punish those that do hurt to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects: But,

2. He utterly denies that God can really be either prejudiced or advantaged by what any, even the greatest of all the men of the East do, or can do.

1. The sins of the worst sinners are no damage to him, ver. 6. If thou sinnest wilfully, and of malice prepense, and designedly against him, with a high hand; nay, if thy transgressions be multiplied, and the acts of sin be never so oft repeated, yet what dost thou against him? This is a challenge to the carnal mind, and defies the most daring sinner to do his worst. It speaks much of the greatness and glory of God, that it is not in the power of his worst enemies, to do him any real prejudice. Sin is said to be against God, because so the sinner intends it, and so he takes it, and it is an injury to his honour, yet it cannot do any thing against him: The malice of sinners is impotent malice: It cannot destroy his being, or perfections, cannot dethrone him from his power and dominion, cannot diminish his wealth and possessions, cannot disturb his peace and repose, cannot defeat his counsels and designs, nor can it derogate from his essential glory. Job therefore did ill to say, *What profit is it that I am cleansed from my sin?* God was no gainer by his reformation, and then who should gain if he himself did not?

2. The services of the best saints are no profit to him, ver. 7. If thou be righteous what givest thou him? He needs not our service: Or if he did want to have the work done, he has better hands than ours at command. Our religion brings no accession at all to his felicity: He is so far from being beholden to us, that we are beholden to him for making us righteous, and accepting our righteousness: and therefore we can demand nothing from him, nor have any reason to complain if we have not what we expect, but to be thankful that we have better than we deserve.

9. By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. 10. But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night? 11. Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven. 12. There they cry (but none giveth answer) because of the pride of evil men. 13. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

Elihu here returns answer to another word that Job had said, which he thought reflected much upon the justice and goodness of God, and therefore ought not to pass without a remark. Observe,

1. What it was that Job complained of: It was this; That God did not regard the cries of the oppressed against their oppressors, ver. 9. By reason of the multitude of oppressions, the many hardships which proud tyrants put upon poor people, and the barbarous usage they give them, they make the oppressed to cry, but to no purpose, God doth not appear to right them: They cry out, they cry on still by reason of the arm of the mighty, which lies heavy upon them. This seems to refer to those words of Job, chap. xxiv. 12. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out against the oppressors, yet God layeth not folly to them, doth not reckon with them for it. This is a thing that Job knows not what to make of, nor how to reconcile to the justice of God, and his government. Is there a righteous God, and can it be he should so slowly hear, so slowly see?

2. How Elihu solves the difficulty: if the cries of the oppressed be not heard, the fault is not in God; he is ready to hear and help them, but the fault is in themselves: They ask and have not, but it is because they ask amiss, Jam. iv. 3. They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, but it is a complaining cry, a wailing cry, not a penitent, praying cry, the cry of nature and passion, not of grace. See Hos. vii. 14. They have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds: And how can we expect then that they should be answered and relieved?

1. They do not enquire after God, nor seek to acquaint themselves with him under their affliction, ver. 10. But none saith, where is God my maker? Afflictions are sent to direct and quicken us to enquire early after God, Psal. lxxviii. 34. But many that groan under great oppressions, never mind God, nor take notice of his hand in their troubles; if they did they would bear their troubles more patiently, and be more bettered by them. Of the many that are afflicted and oppressed, few get the good they might get by their affliction: It should drive them to God, but how seldom doth it so? It is a piteous thing to see so little

religion among the poor and miserable part of mankind: Every one complains of his troubles; but none saith, where is God my maker? i. e. none repent of their sins, none return to him that smiteth them, none seek the face and favour of God, and that comfort in him which would balance their outward afflictions: They are wholly taken up with the calamitousness of their condition, as if that would excuse them in living without God in the world, which should engage them to cleave the more closely to him. Observe, (1.) God is our maker, the author of our being, and under that notion it concerns us to regard, and remember him, Eccles. xii. 1. God my makers, in the plural number; which some think is, if not an indication, yet an intimation of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; Let us make man. (2.) It is our duty therefore to enquire after him: Where is he that we may pay our homage to him, may own our dependence upon him, and obligations to him? Where is he that we may apply ourselves to him for maintenance and protection, may receive law from him, and may seek our happiness in his favour, from whose power we received our being? (3.) It is to be lamented, that he is so little enquired after by the children of men: All are asking where is mirth, and where is wealth, and where is a good bargain, but none ask, Where is God my maker?

2. They do not take notice of the mercies they enjoy in and under their afflictions, nor are thankful for them, and therefore cannot expect that God should deliver them out of their afflictions. (1.) He provides for our inward comfort and joy under our outward troubles, and we ought to make use of that, and wait his time for the removal of our troubles. He giveth songs in the night, i. e. when our condition is never so dark, and sad, and melancholy, there is that in God, in his providence and promise, which is sufficient not only to support us, but to fill us with joy and consolation, and enable us in every thing to give thanks, and even to rejoice in tribulation: When we only pore upon the afflictions we are under, and neglect the consolations of God which are treasured up for us, it is just with God to reject our prayers. (2.) He preserves to us the use of our reason and understanding, ver. 11. Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, i. e. who has endued us with more noble powers and faculties than they are endued with, and hath made us capable of more excellent enjoyments, and employments here and for ever. Now this comes in here, (1.) As that which furnisheth us with matter for thanksgiving, even under the heaviest burthen of affliction. Whatever we are deprived of, we have our immortal souls, those jewels, more worth than all the world, continued to us, and even those that kill the body, cannot hurt them. And if our affliction prevail not to disturb the exercise of their faculties, but we enjoy the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences, we have a great deal of reason to be thankful, how pressing soever our calamities otherwise are. 2. As a reason why we should under our afflictions enquire after God our maker, and seek unto him. This is the greatest excellency of reason that it makes us capable of religion, and it is in that especially that we are taught more than the beasts and the fowls. They have wonderful instincts and sagacities in seeking out their food, their physic, their shelter; but none of them are capable of enquiring, Where is God my maker? Something like logick, and philosophy, and politicks, have been observed among the brute creatures, but never any thing of divinity or religion: These are peculiar to man: If therefore the oppressed only cry by reason of the arm of the mighty, and do not look up to God, they do no more than the brutes, who complain when they are hurt, and forget that instruction and wisdom by which they are advanced so far above them. God relieves the brute creatures because they cry to him according to the best of their capacity, Psal. civ. 21. Job xxxviii. 41. But what reason have men to expect relief, who are capable of enquiring after God as their maker, and yet cry to him no otherwise than as brutes do?

3. They are proud and unhumiliated under their afflictions, which were sent to mortify them, and to hide pride from them, ver. 12. There they cry, there they lie exclaiming against their oppressors, and filling the ears of all about them with their complaints, not sparing to reflect upon God himself and his providence, but none giveth answer: God doth not work deliverance for them, and perhaps men do not much regard them; and why so? It is because of the pride of evil men: they are evil men; they regard iniquity in their hearts, and therefore God will not hear their prayers, Psal. lxvi. 18. Isa. i. 11. God heareth not such sinners. They have, it may be, brought themselves into trouble by their own wickedness, they are the devil's poor, and then who can pity them? Yet this is not all, they are proud still; therefore they do not seek unto God, Psal. x. 4. Or if they do cry unto him, therefore he doth not give answer, for he hears only the desire of the humble, Psal. x. 17. and delivers those by his providence, whom he hath first by his grace prepared and made fit by deliverance, and that we are not, if under humbling afflictions our hearts remain unhumiliated, and pride un-mortified. The case is plain then, if we cry to God for the removal of the oppression and affliction we are under, and it is not removed, the reason is not because the Lord's hand is shortned, or his ear heavy, but because the affliction has not done its work,

we are not sufficiently humbled, and therefore must thank our selves that it is continued.

4. They are not sincere and upright, and inward with God in their supplications to him, and therefore he doth not hear and answer them, *ver. 13. God will not hear vanity*, i. e. the hypocritical prayer which is a vain prayer, coming out of feigned lips. It is a vanity to think that God should hear it who searcheth the heart; and requires truth in the inward part.

14. Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him, therefore trust thou in him.

15. But now because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger, yet he knoweth it not in great extremity: 16. Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain: he multiplieth words without knowledge.

Here is, 1. Another ill word for which Elihu reproves Job, *ver. 14. Thou sayest thou shalt not see him*; i. e. (1.) Thou complaineest that thou dost not understand the meaning of his severe dealings with thee, nor discern the drift and design of them, *chap. xxiii. 8, 9.* And, (2.) Thou despairest of seeing his gracious returns to thee, of seeing better days again, and art ready to give up all for gone, as Hezekiah, *Isa. xxxviii. 11. I shall not see the Lord.* As when we are in prosperity, we are ready to think our mountain should never be brought low; so when we are in adversity, we are ready to think our valley will never be filled, but in both to conclude, that *to-morrow must be as this day*, which is as absurd as to think that the weather, when it is either fair or foul will be always so, that the flowing tide will always flow, or the ebbing tide will always ebb.

2. The answer which Elihu gives to this despairing word that Job had said, which is this.

1. That when he looked up to God, he had no just reason, to speak thus despairingly: For judgment is before him, i. e. He knows what he has to do, and will do all in infinite wisdom and justice: he has the entire plan and model of providence before him, and knows what he will do, which we do not, and therefore understand not what he doth. There is a day of judgment before him, when all the seeming disorders of providence will be set to rights, and the dark chapters of it will be expounded: Then thou shalt see the full meaning of these dark events, and the final period of these dismal events; then thou shalt see his face with joy; therefore trust in him, depend upon him, wait for him, and believe that the issue will be good at last. When we consider that God is infinitely wise, and righteous, and faithful, and that he is a God of judgment, (*Isa. xxx. 18.*) we shall see no reason to despair of relief from him, but all the reason in the world to hope in him, that it will come in due time, in the best time.

2. That if he had not yet seen an end of his troubles, the reason was because he did not thus trust in God, and wait for him, *ver. 15. Because it is not so*; because thou dost not thus trust in him, therefore the affliction which came at first from love, has now displeasure mixed with it: Now God hath visited thee in his anger, taking it very ill that thou canst not find in thy heart to trust him, but harbourest such hard misgiving thoughts of him. If there be any mixtures of divine wrath in our afflictions, we may thank our selves, it is because we do not carry our selves aright under them, we quarrel with God, are fretful and impatient, and distrustful of the divine providence. This was Job's case; *The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord*, *Prov. xix. 3.* yet Elihu thinks that Job being in great extremity, did not know and consider that as he should, that it is his own fault that he is not yet delivered.

He concludes therefore that *Job opens his mouth in vain*, *ver. 16. viz.* in complaining of his grievances, and crying for redress, or in justifying himself, and clearing up his own innocency; it is all in vain, because he doth not trust in God, and wait for him, and had not a due regard to him in his afflictions. He had said a great deal, had multiplied words, but all without knowledge; all to no purpose, because he did not encourage himself in God, and humble himself before him. It is in vain for us either to appeal to God, or to acquit our selves if we do not study to answer the end for which affliction is sent; and in vain to pray for relief if we do not trust in God, for let not that man that distrusts God, think that he shall receive any thing from him, *Jam. i. 7.* Or this may refer to all that Job had said. Having shewed the absurdity of some passages in his discourse, he concludes, there were many other passages that were in like manner the fruits of his ignorance and mistake. He did not, as his other friends, condemn him for an hypocrite, but chargeth him only with Moses's sin, *speaking unadvisedly with his lips*, when his spirit was provoked: And when at any time we do so, (and who is there that offends not in word?) it is a mercy to be told of it, and we must take it patiently and kindly as Job did; not repeating but recanting what we have said amiss.

C H A P. XXXVI.

Elihu having largely reprov'd Job for some of his unadvised speeches, which Job had nothing to say in the vindication of, here comes more generally to set him to rights in his notions of God's dealings with him. His other friends had stood to it, that because he was a wicked man, therefore his afflictions were so great and so long; Elihu saith, no, the affliction was sent for his trial, and therefore it was lengthned out because Job was not as yet thoroughly humbled under it, nor had duly accommodated himself to it. And many reasons he urgeth, taken from the wisdom and righteousness of God, his care of his people, and especially his greatness and almighty power, with which in this and the following chapter, he persuades himself to submit to the hand of God. Here we have, (1.) His preface, *ver. 2—4.* (2.) The account he gives of the methods of God's providences toward the children of men, according as they carry themselves, *ver. 5—15.* (3.) The fair warning and good counsel he gives to Job thereupon, *ver. 16—21.* (4.) His demonstration of God's sovereignty and omnipotence, which he gives instances of in the operations of common providence, and which is a reason why we should all submit to him in his dealings with us, *ver. 22—33.* This he prosecutes and enlarges upon in the following chapter.

1. ELIHU also proceeded, and said, 2. Suffer me a little and I will shew thee, that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. 3. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my maker. 4. For truly, my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.

Once more Elihu begs the patience of the auditory, and Job's particularly, for he has not said all he has to say, but will have done presently. *Stand about me a little*; so some read it, *ver. 2.* Let me have your attendance, your attention a while longer, and I will speak but this once, as plainly, and as much to the purpose as I can. To gain this he pleads,

1. That he had a good cause, a noble subject, and a very fruitful one. I have yet to speak on God's behalf. He spoke as an advocate for God, and therefore might justly expect the ear of the court. Some indeed pretend to speak on God's behalf that really speak for themselves, but those who sincerely appear in the cause of God, and speak in behalf of his honour, his truths, his ways, his people, they shall be sure neither to want instructions (*It shall be given them in that same hour what they shall speak*) nor to lose their cause, nor to lose their fee. Nor need they fear the exhausting of their subject: They that have spoken never so much, may yet find more to be spoken on God's behalf.

2. That he had something to offer that was uncommon, and out of the road of vulgar observation. *I will fetch my knowledge from afar*, *ver. 3.* i. e. we will have recourse to our first principles, and the highest notions we can make use of to serve any purpose. It is worth while to go far for this knowledge of God, to dig for it, to travel for it, it will recompense our pains, and tho' far fetched is not dear bought.

3. That his design was undeniably honest; for all he aimed at was to ascribe righteousness to his Maker; to maintain and clear this truth, that God is righteous in all his ways. In speaking of God, and speaking for him, it is good to remember that he is our Master, to call him so, and therefore to be ready to do him, and the interests of his kingdom, the best service we can. If he be our maker, we have our all from him, must use our all for him, and be very jealous for his honour.

4. That his management should be very just and fair; *ver. 4. My words shall not be false*, neither disagreeable to the thing itself, nor to my own thoughts and apprehensions. It is truth I am contending for, and that for truth's sake, with all possible sincerity and plainness: He will make use of plain and solid arguments, and not the subtilties and niceties of the schools: He that is perfect or upright in knowledge is now reasoning with thee, and therefore let him not only have a fair hearing, but let what he saith be taken in good part as meant well. The perfection of our knowledge in this world is to be honest and sincere in searching out truth, in applying it to ourselves, and in making use of what we know for the good of others.

5. Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength, and wisdom. 6. He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor. 7. He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne, yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted. 8. And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction: 9. Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. 10. He openeth

openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. 11. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. 12. But if they obey not, and they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge. 13. But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them. 14. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.

Elihu being to speak on God's behalf, and particularly to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, here shews, that the dispensals of divine providence are all of them, not only according to the eternal counsels of his will, but according to the eternal rules of equity. God acts as a righteous governor. For, 1. He doth not think it below him to take notice of the meanest of his subjects, nor doth poverty or obscurity set any at a distance from his favour. If men are mighty, they are apt to look with a haughty disdain upon those that are not of distinction, and make no figure; but God is mighty, infinitely so, and yet he despiseth not any, *ver. 5.* He humbleth himself to take cognizance of the affairs of the meanest, to do them justice, and to shew them kindness. Job thought himself and his cause slighted, because God did not presently appear for him. No, saith Elihu, God despiseth not any; which is a good reason why we should honour all men. He is mighty in strength and wisdom, and yet doth not look with contempt upon those that have but a little strength and wisdom if they but mean honestly. Nay, therefore he despiseth not any, because his wisdom and strength are incontestibly infinite, and therefore the condescensions of his grace can be no diminution to him. They that are wise and good will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

2. He gives no countenance to the greatest, if they be bad, *ver. 6.* He preserveth not the life of the wicked. Tho' their life may be prolonged, yet not under any special care of the divine providence, but only the common protection of it. Job had said that *the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power*, Job xxi. 7. No, saith Elihu, he seldom suffers wicked men to become old. He preserveth not their life, so long as they expected, nor with that comfort and satisfaction which is indeed our life; and their preservation is but a reservation for the day of wrath, *Rom. ii. 5.*

3. He is always ready to right those that are any way injured, and to plead their causes, *ver. 6.* He giveth right to the poor, avengeth their quarrel upon their persecutors, and forceth them to make restitution of what they have robbed them of. If men will not right the injured poor, God will.

4. He takes a particular care for the protection of his good subjects, *ver. 7.* He not only looks on them, but he never looks off them. He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous. Tho' they may seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, and that befalls them which looks like an oversight of providence, yet the tender careful eye of their heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever towards God in duty, his eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and when we are at the lowest, will not overlook us.

1. Sometimes he prefers good people to places of trust and honour, *ver. 7.* *With kings are they on the throne*, and every sheaf is made to bow to theirs. When righteous persons are advanced to places of honour and power, it is in mercy to them, for God's grace in them will both arm them against the temptations that attend preferment, and enable them to improve the opportunity it gives them of doing good. It is also in mercy to those over whom they are set; *When the righteous bear rule, the city rejoiceth.* If the righteous be advanced, they are established. They that in honour keep a good conscience, stand upon sure ground, and high places are not such slippery ground to them as they are to others. But because it is not often that we see good men made great men in this world, this may be supposed to refer to the honour to which the righteous shall rise when their redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, for then only shall they be exalted for ever, and established for ever, then shall they all shine forth as the sun, and be made kings and priests to our God.

2. If at any time he bring them into affliction, it is for the good of their souls, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* Some good people are preferred to honour and power, but others are in trouble. Now observe, (1.) The distress supposed, *ver. 8.* *If they be bound in fetters*, laid in prison as Joseph was, or holden in the cords of any other affliction, suppose them confined by pain and sickness, hampered by poverty, bound in their counsels, notwithstanding all their struggles, held long in this distress. This was Job's case: He was caught and kept fast in the cords of anguish, as some read it. But observe, (2.) The design God has in bringing his people into such distresses as these, it is for the benefit of their souls, the consideration of which should reconcile us to affliction, and make us think well of it. Three things God intends when he afflicts us, (1.) To discover past sins to us, and to bring them to our remembrance, *ver. 9.* *Then he shews them*

that amiss in them, which before they did not see. He discovers to them the fact of sin, he shews them their work; sin is our own work: if there be any good in us it is God's work; and we are concerned to see what work we have made by sin. He discovers the fault of sin, shews them their transgressions of the law of God, and withal, the sinfulness of sin that they have exceeded, and have been beyond measure sinful. True penitents lay a load upon themselves, do not extenuate, but aggravate their sins, and own that they have exceeded in them. Affliction sometimes answers the sin, however it awakens the conscience, and puts men upon considering. (2.) To dispose our hearts to receive present instructions: Then *he opens their ear to discipline*, *ver. 10.* Whom God chastens he teaches, *Psal. xciv. 12.* and the affliction makes people willing to learn, softens the wax, that it may receive the impression of the seal, yet it doth not do it of itself, but the grace of God working with and by it: it is he that opens the ear, that opens the heart, who has the key of David. (3.) To deter and draw us off from iniquity, for the future: This is the errand on which the affliction is sent; it is a command to return from iniquity, to have no more to do with sin, turn from it with an aversion to it, and a resolution never to return to it any more, *Hos. xiv. 8.*

3. If the affliction do its work, and accomplish that for which it is sent, he will comfort them again according to the time, that he has afflicted them, *ver. 11.* *If they obey and serve him*, if they comply with his design, and serve his purpose in these dispensations, if when the affliction is removed, they continue in the same good mind that they were in when they were under the smart of it, and perform the vows they made then, if they live in obedience to God's commands, particularly those which relate to his service and worship, and in all instances make conscience of their duty to him, then they shall spend their days in prosperity again, and their years in true pleasures. Religion and piety is the only sure way to prosperity and pleasure: This is a certain truth, and yet few will believe it. If we faithfully serve God, (1.) We have the promise of outward prosperity, the promise of the life that now is, and the comforts of it as far as is for God's glory and our good, and who would desire them any further? (2.) We have the possession of inward pleasures, the comfort of communion with God, and a good conscience, and that great peace which they have that love God's law. If we rejoice not in the Lord always, and in hope of eternal life, it is our own fault: And what better pleasures can we spend our years in?

4. If the affliction do not do its work, let them expect the furnace to be heated seven times hotter till they are consumed, *ver. 12.* *If they obey not*, if they are not bettered by their afflictions, are not reclaimed and reformed, they shall perish by the sword of God's wrath. Those whom his rod is not the cure of, his sword will be the death of; and the consuming fire will prevail if the refining fire do not. For when God judgeth he will overcome. If *Abaz in his distress trespass yet more against the Lord.* This is that king Abaz, that is marked for ruin, *2 Chron. xxviii. 22.* *Jer. vi. 29, 30.* God would have instructed them by their afflictions, but they received not instruction, would not take the hints that were given them, and therefore they shall "die without knowledge," ere they are aware, without any further previous notices given them; or they shall "die because they were without knowledge," notwithstanding the means of knowledge which they were blessed with. They that "die without knowledge" die without grace, and are undone for ever.

Lastly, He brings ruin upon hypocrites, the secret enemies of his kingdom, such as he described, *ver. 12.* who tho' they were numbered among the righteous, whom he had spoken of before, yet did not obey him, but being children of disobedience and darkness become children of wrath and perdition, these are the hypocrites in heart who heap up wrath, *ver. 13.* See the nature of hypocrisy, it lies in the heart, that is for the world and the flesh when the outside seems to be for God and religion. Many that are saints in shew, and saints in word, are hypocrites in heart. That spring is corrupt, and there is an evil treasure there. See the mischievousness of it, hypocrites heap up wrath. They are doing that every day which is provoking to God, and will be reckoned with for it altogether in the great day. *They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*, *Rom. ii. 5.* Their sins are laid up in store with God among his treasures, *Deut. xxxii. 34.* compare *James v. 3.* As what goes up a vapour comes down a shower, so what goes up sin, if not repented of, will come down wrath. They think they are heaping up wealth, heaping up merits, but when the treasures are opened, it will prove they were heaping up wrath.

Observe, (1.) What they do to heap up wrath: what is it that is so provoking? It is this, *they cry not when he binds them*, i. e. when they are in affliction, bound with the cords of trouble, their hearts are hardened, they are stubborn and humbled, and will not cry to God, nor make their application to him. They are stupid and senseless, as stocks and stones, despising the chastening of the Lord. 2. What are the effects of that wrath? *ver. 14.* *They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.* This is the portion of hypocrites, whom Christ denounced many woes against. If they continue impenitent, (1.) They shall die a sudden

sudden death; die in youth, when death is most a surprize, and so death (*i. e.* the consequences of it) always is to hypocrites; as they that die in youth, die when they hoped to live; so hypocrites at death go to hell when they hoped to go to heaven. *When a wicked man dies, his expectations shall perish.* (2.) They shall die the second death: their life after death (for so it comes in here) is among the unclean; among the fornicators, so some; among the worst and vilest of sinners, notwithstanding their specious and plausible profession. It is among the Sodomites, so the margin; those filthy wretches, who *going after strange flesh are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,* Jude 7. The souls of the wicked live after death, but they live among the unclean, the unclean spirits, the devil and his angels, for ever separated from the new Jerusalem, into which *no unclean thing shall enter.*

15. He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression. 16. Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where *there is no straitness*, and that which should be set on thy table, *should be full of fatness.* 17. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee. 18. Because *there is wrath*, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. 19. Will he esteem thy riches? *no* not gold, nor all the forces of strength. 20. Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place. 21. Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction. 22. Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him? 23. Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?

Elihu here comes more closely to Job; and

1. He tells what God would have done for him before this, if he had been duly humbled under his affliction. We all know how ready God is to *deliver the poor in his affliction*, ver. 15. He always was so; the poor in spirit, those that are of a broken and contrite heart, he looks upon with tenderness, and when they are in affliction is ready to them. He opens their ears, and makes them to hear joy and gladness, even in their oppressions; while he doth not yet deliver them, he speaks to them good words, and comfortable words, for the encouragement of their faith and patience, the silencing of their fears, and the balancing of their griefs: and even so (ver. 16.) would he have done to thee, if thou hadst submitted to his providence, and carried thy self well, he would have delivered and comforted thee, and we should have had none of these complaints. If thou hadst accommodated thy self to the will of God, thy liberty and plenty would have been restored to thee with advantage. (1.) Thou hadst been enlarged, and not confined thus, by thy sickness and disgrace: he would have *removed thee into a broad place where is no straitness*, and thou shouldst no longer have been cramped thus, and have had all thy measures broken. (2.) Thou hadst been enriched, and not in this poor condition; thou shouldst have had thy table richly spread, not only with food convenient but with the finest of the wheat, (see Deut. xxxii. 14.) and the fattest of the flesh. Note, It ought to silence us under our afflictions to consider that if we were better, it would be every way better with us: if we had answered the ends of an affliction, the affliction would be removed; and deliverance would come if we were ready for it. God would have done well for us, if we had carried ourselves well, Psal. lxxxi. 13, 14. Isa. xlviii. 18.

2. He chargeth him with standing in his own light, and makes him the cause of the continuance of his own trouble, ver. 17. *But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked*, *i. e.* Whatever thou art really, in this thing thou hast carried thy self like a wicked man, hast spoken and done like them; thou hast gratified them and served their cause; and therefore judgment and justice take hold on thee, as a wicked man, because thou goest in company with them, actest as if thou wert in their interest, aiding and abetting. Thou hast maintained the cause of the wicked, and such as a man's cause is, such will the judgment of God be upon him. So bishop Patrick. It is dangerous being on the wrong side: accessories to treason will be dealt with as principals.

3. He cautions him not to persist in his frowardness; several good cautions he gives him to this purpose.

1. Let him not make light of divine vengeance, nor be secure, as if he were in no danger of it, ver. 18. Because there is wrath, *i. e.* Because God is a righteous governor, who renews all the affronts given to his government. Because he has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and because thou hast reason to fear that thou art under God's displeasure, therefore beware lest he take thee away suddenly with his stroke, and be so wise as to make thy peace with him quickly, and get his anger turned away from thee. A warning to this purpose Job had given his friends, chap. xix. 29. *Be ye afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword.*

Thus contenders are apt with too much boldness to bind one another over to the judgment of God; and threaten one another with his wrath: but he that keeps a good conscience needs not fear the impotent menaces of proud men. But this was a friendly caution to Job, and necessary. Even good men have need to be kept to their duty by the fear of God's wrath. Thou art a wife and good man, but beware lest he take thee away, for the wisest and best have enough in them to deserve his stroke.

2. Let him not promise himself that if God's wrath should kindle against him he could find out ways to escape the strokes of it. (1.) There is no escaping by money; no purchasing a pardon with silver or gold, and such corruptible things. Even a great ransom cannot deliver thee when God enters into judgment with thee: his justice cannot be bribed, nor any of the ministers of his justice: will he esteem thy riches, and take from them a commutation of the punishment? No, not gold, ver. 19. If thou hadst as much wealth as ever thou hadst, that would not ease thee, would not secure thee from the strokes of God's wrath, in the day of the revelation of which *riches profit not*, Prov. xi. 4. See Psal. xlix. 7, 8. (2.) No escaping by rescue. If all the forces of strength were at thy command, if thou couldst muster never so many servants and vassals to appear for thee, to force thee out of the hands of divine vengeance, it were all in vain, God would not regard it, there *is none that can deliver out of his hand*. (3.) No escaping by absconding, ver. 20. Desire not the night, which often favours the retreat of a conquered army, and covers it: think not that thou canst so escape the righteous judgment of God, for the *darkness hideth not from him*, Psal. cxxxix. 11, 12. See Job xxxiv. 22. Think not that because in the night people retire to their place, go up to their beds, and so it is easy then to escape their discovery, that God also attends to his place, and cannot see thee: no, he *neither slumbers nor sleeps*: his eyes are open upon the children of men, not only in all places, but at all times: no rocks or mountains can shelter us from his eye. Some understand it of the night of death. That is the night by which men are cut off from their place, and Job had earnestly breathed unto that night, as the hireling desires the evening, Job vii. 2. But do not do so, saith Elihu; for thou knowest not what the night of death is. Those that passionately wish for death, in hopes to make that their shelter from God's wrath, may perhaps be mistaken. There are those whom wrath pursues into that night.

3. Let him not continue his unjust quarrel with God, and his providence, which hitherto he had persisted in when he should have submitted to the affliction, ver. 21. Take heed, look well to thine own spirit, and regard not iniquity, return not to it; so some; for it is at thy peril if thou do. Let us never dare to think a favourable thought of sin, never indulge it, nor allow ourselves in it. Elihu thinks Job had need of this caution, he having chosen iniquity rather than affliction, *i. e.* having chosen rather to gratify his own pride and humour in contending with God, than to mortify it, by a submission to him, and accepting the punishment. We may take it more generally, and observe, that they who choose iniquity rather than affliction, make a very foolish choice; that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, increase their wealth by sinful pursuits, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness sake by sinful compliances against their consciences, these make a choice they will repent of, for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction. It is an evil, an only evil.

4. Let him not dare to prescribe to God, nor give him his measures, ver. 22, 23. *Behold, God exalteth by his power*, *i. e.* He doth, may, and can, set up and pull down whom he pleaseth, and therefore it is not for thee and me to contend with him. The more we magnify God, the more do we humble and abase ourselves. Now consider,

(1.) That God is an absolute sovereign. He exalteth himself by his own power, and not by strength derived from any other: he exalteth whom he pleaseth, exalteth those that were afflicted and cast down, by the strength and power which he gives his people. And therefore who has enjoined him his way? Who presides above him in his way? Is there any superior from whom he has his commission, and to whom he is accountable? No, he himself is supreme and independent. Who *puts him in mind of his way*? so some; doth the eternal mind need a remembrancer? No, his own way, as well as ours, is ever before him: he has not received orders or instructions from any, Isa. xl. 13, 14. nor is he accountable to any: he enjoins to all the creatures their way, let not us then enjoin him his, but leave it to him to govern the world, who is fit to do it.

(2.) That he is an incomparable teacher. *Who teacheth like him*? It is absurd for us to teach him who is himself the fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction: *he that teacheth man knowledge*, and so as none else can, *shall not be known*? Psal. xciv. 9, 10. Shall we light a candle to the sun? Observe, when Elihu would give glory to God as a ruler he praiseth him as a teacher, for rulers must teach; God doth so, he binds with the cords of a man. In this, as in other things, he is a non-such. None so fit to direct his own actions as he himself is: he knows what he has to do, and how to do it for the best, and needs no information or advice. Solomon himself had a privy counsel to advise him

him, but the King of kings has none. Nor is any so fit to direct our actions as he is: none teacheth with such authority and convincing evidence, with such condescension and compassion, nor with such power and efficacy as God doth. He teacheth by the bible, and that is the best book, teacheth by his Son, and he is the best master.

(3.) That he is unexceptionably just in all his proceedings. *Who can say, thou hast wrought iniquity?* Not who dares say it; many do iniquity, but if any tell them of it, it is at their peril; but who can say it, who had any cause to say it? Who can say it and prove it? It is a maxim undoubtedly true, without limitation, that *the King of kings can do no wrong.*

24. Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold. 25. Every man may see it, man may behold it afar off. 26. Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. 27. For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: 28. Which the clouds do drop, and distil upon man abundantly. 29. Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle? 30. Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea. 31. For by them judgeth he the people, he giveth meat in abundance. 32. With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it *not to shine*; by the cloud that cometh betwixt. 33. The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.

Elihu is here endeavouring to possess Job with great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him into a cheerful submission to his providence.

1. He represents the work of God in general as illustrious and conspicuous, *ver. 24.* His whole work is so, God doth nothing mean: this is a good reason why we should acquiesce in all the operations of his providence concerning us in particular: his visible works, those of nature, and which concern the world in general, are such as we admire and commend, and observe the Creator's wisdom, power, and goodness, shall we then find fault with his dispensations concerning us, and the counsels of his will concerning our affairs? We are here called to *consider the work of God*, Eccl. vii. 13. (1.) It is plain before our eyes; nothing more obvious: it is *what men behold*: every man that has but half an eye may see it, may behold it afar off. Look which way we will, and we see the products of God's wisdom and power; we see that done, and that in the doing, concerning which we cannot but say, this is *the work of God*; the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing. Every man may see afar off the heaven and all its lights, the earth, and all its fruits, to be the work of omnipotence; and much more when we behold them nigh at hand: look at the minutest works of nature through a microscope, do they appear curious? The eternal power and Godhead of the Creator is *clearly seen and understood by the things that are made*, Rom. i. 20. Every man, even those that have not the benefit of divine revelation, may see this, for *there is no speech or language where the voice of these natural constant preachers is not heard*, Psal. xix. 3. (2.) It ought to be marvellous in our eyes. The beauty and excellency of the work of God, and the agreement of all the parts of it, is what we must remember to magnify, and highly to extol: not only justify it as right and good, and what cannot be blamed, but magnify it as wise and glorious, and such as no creature could contrive or produce. Man may see his works, and is capable of discerning his hand in them, which the beasts are not, and therefore ought to praise them, and give him the glory of them.

2. He represents God, the author of him, as infinite and unsearchable, *ver. 26.* The streams of being, power, and perfection, should lead us to the fountain. God is great, infinitely so; great in power, for he is omnipotent and independent; great in wealth, for he is self-sufficient and all-sufficient; great in himself, great in all his works, great, and therefore greatly to be praised: great, and therefore we know him not; we know that he is; but not what he is: we know what he is not, but not what he is. We know in part, but not in perfection. This comes in here as a reason why we must not arraign his proceedings, nor find fault with what he doth, because it is speaking evil of the things that we understand not; and answering a matter before we hear it. We know not the duration of his existence; for it is infinite: the number of his years cannot possibly be searched out, for he is eternal, there is no number of them: he is a being without beginning, succession, or period, that ever was and ever will be, and ever the same, the great *I AM*. This is a good reason why we should not prescribe to him or quarrel with him, because as he is, such are his operations, quite out of our reach.

3. He gives some instances of God's wisdom and power, and sovereign dominion in the works of nature, and the dispensations

of common providence; and begins in this chapter with the clouds and the rain that descends from them. We need not be critical in examining either the phrase or the philosophy of this noble discourse. The general scope of it is to shew, (1.) That God is infinitely great and the Lord of all, the first cause and supreme director of all the creatures, and *has all power in heaven and earth*, and whom therefore we ought with all humility and reverence to adore, to speak well of, and to give honour to. (2.) That it is presumption for us to prescribe to him the rules and methods of his special providence towards the children of men; as to expect from him an account of them, when the operations even of common providences about the meteors are so various, and so mysterious and unaccountable.

Elihu to affect Job with God's sublimity and sovereignty, had directed him, *chap. xxxv. 5.* to look unto the clouds, now in these verses he shews us what we may observe in the clouds we see, which will lead us to consider the glorious perfections of their Creator. Consider the clouds,

1. As springs to this lower world; the source and treasure of its moisture, and the great bank through which it circulates, and that is as necessary, and the stagnation of it would be as hurtful to this lower world as of the blood to the body of man. It is worth while to observe in this common occurrence, (1.) That the clouds above distil upon the earth below: if the heavens become brass, the earth becomes iron, therefore thus the promise of plenty runs, *I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth*. This intimates to us that every good gift is from above; from him who is both Father of lights, and Father of the rain, and instructs us to direct our prayers to him, and to look up. 2. That they are here said to distil upon man, *ver. 28.* for tho' indeed he *caused it to rain in the wilderness, where no man is*, Job xxxviii. 26. Psal. civ. 11. yet special respect is had to man herein, to whom the inferior creatures are all made serviceable, and from whom the actual return of the tributes of praise is required. And among men he *causeth his rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust*, Matth. v. 45. (3.) They are said to distil the water in small drops; not in spouts, as when the *windows of heaven were opened*, Gen. vii. 11. God waters the earth with that with which he once drowned it, only dispensed it in another manner, to let us know how much we lie at his mercy, and how kind he is in giving rain by drops, that the benefit of it may be the further and the more equally diffused, as by an artificial water-pot. (4.) Tho' sometimes the rain comes in very small drops, yet at other times it pours down in great rain, and this difference between one shower and another must be resolved into the divine providence, which orders it so. (5.) Tho' it comes down in drops, yet it distils upon man abundantly, *ver. 28.* and therefore is called *the river of God which is full of water*, Psal. lxxv. 9. (6.) The clouds pour down according to the vapour that they draw up, *ver. 27.* Thus just the heavens are to the earth, but the earth is not so in the returns it makes. (7.) The produce of the clouds is sometimes a great terror, and at other times a great favour to the earth, *ver. 31.* When he pleaseth *he doth by them judge the people* he is angry with. Storms, and tempests, and excessive rains, destroying the fruits of the earth, and causing inundations, come from the clouds, but on the other hand ordinarily from them he giveth meat in abundance, they drop fatness upon the pastures that are clothed with flocks, and the vallies that are *covered with corn*, Psal. lxxv. 11, 12, 13. Lastly, Notice is sometimes given of the approach of rain, *ver. 39.* The noise thereof, among other things, sheweth concerning it. Hence we read, 1 Kings xviii. 41. of the sound of abundance of rain, or, as it is in the margin, a sound of a noise of rain, before it came, and a welcome harbinger it was then. And as the noise, so the face of the sky sheweth concerning it, Luke xii. 56. The cattle also by a strange instinct are apprehensive of a change in the weather nigh at hand, and seek for shelter, shaming man, who will not foresee the evil and hide himself.

2. As shadows to the upper world, *ver. 29.* *Can any understand the spreading of the clouds?* They are spread over the earth as a curtain or canopy, how they come to be so, how stretched out, and how poised as they are, we cannot understand, tho' we daily see they are so. Shall we then pretend to understand the reasons and methods of God's judicial proceedings with the children of men, whose characters and cases are so various, when we cannot account for the spreadings of the clouds, which cover the light? *ver. 32.* It is a cloud coming betwixt, *chap. xxvi. 9.* And this we are sensible of, that by the interposition of the clouds between us and the sun we are, (1.) Sometimes favoured, for they serve as an umbrella to shelter us from the violent heat of the sun, which otherwise would beat upon us. A *cloud of dew in the heat of harvest*, is spoken of as a very great refreshment, Isa. xviii. 4. (2.) Sometimes we are by them frowned upon, for they darken the earth at noon-day, and eclipse the light of the sun. Sin is compared to a cloud, (Psal. xlv. 22.) because it comes between us and the light of God's countenance, and obstructs the shining of it. But tho' the cloud darken the sun for a time, and pour down rain, yet (*post nubila Phœbus*) after he has wearied the cloud he spreads his light upon it, *ver. 30.* There is a *clear shining after rain*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. the sun-beams are darted forth, and reach to cover the bottom of the sea, thence to exhale

a fresh supply of vapours, and so raise recruits for the clouds. In all this we must remember to magnify the work of God.

C H A P. XXXVII.

Elihu here goes on to extol the wonderful power of God in the meteors, and all the changes of the weather: if in those changes we submit to the will of God, take the weather as it is, and make the best of it, why should we not do so in other changes of our condition? Here he observes the hand of God, (1.) In the thunder and lightning, ver. 1—5. (2.) In the frost and snow, the rains and wind, ver. 6—13. (3.) He applies it to Job, and challengeeth him to solve the phenomena of these works of nature, that confessing his ignorance in them, he might own himself an incompetent judge in the proceedings of divine providence, ver. 14—22. And then, (4.) Concludes with his principle which he undertook to make out, that God is great and greatly to be feared, ver. 23, 24.

1. **A**T this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place. 2. Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. 3. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. 4. After it a voice roareth: he thundreth with the voice of his excellency, and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. 5. God thundreth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.

Thunder and lightning, which usually go together, are sensible indications of the glory and majesty, the power and terror, of Almighty God, one to the ear, and the other to the eye: in these God leaves not himself without witness of his greatness, as in the rain from heaven and fruitful seasons he leaves not himself without witness of his goodness, (*Acts* xiv. 17.) even to the most stupid and unthinking. Tho' there be natural causes and useful effects of them, which the philosophers undertake to account for, yet they seem chiefly designed by the Creator to startle and awaken the slumbering dozing world of mankind to the consideration of a God above them. The eye and the ear are the two learning senses, and therefore tho' it is possible it might have been, yet they say it was never known in fact that any one was born both blind and deaf. By the word of God divine instructions are conveyed to the mind through the ear, by his works through the eye: but because those ordinary sights and sounds do not duly affect men, God is pleased sometimes to astonish men by the eye with his lightnings, and by the ear with his thunder. It is very probable that at this time, when Elihu was speaking, it thundered and lightened; for he speaks of it as present: and God being about to speak, *chap.* xxxviii. 1. these were, as afterwards on mount Sinai, the proper prefaces to command attention and awe. Observe here,

1. How Elihu was himself affected, and desired to affect Job with the appearances of God's glory in the thunder and lightning, *ver.* 1, 2. For my part (saith Elihu) my heart trembleth at it, tho' I have often heard it, often seen it, yet it is still terrible to me, and makes every joint of me tremble, and my heart beat so as if it would move out of its place. Thunder and lightning have been dreadful to the wicked; the emperor Caligula would run into a corner, or under a bed, for fear of them: those who are very much astonished, we say are thunder struck: and even good people think them very awful: and that which makes them the more terrible, is the hurt often done by lightning, many have been killed by it: Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ruins by it: it is a sensible indication what God would do to this sinful world, and what he will do at last by the fire to which it is reserved. Our hearts, like Elihu's, should tremble at it for fear of God's judgments, *Psal.* cxix. 120. He also calls upon Job to attend to it, *ver.* 2. *Hear attentively the noise of his voice.* Perhaps, as yet, it thundered at a distance, and could not be heard without listening: or rather, tho' the thunder itself will be heard, and whatever we are doing we cannot help attending to it; yet to apprehend and understand the instructions God thereby gives us, we have need to hear with a great attention and application of mind. Thunder is called *the voice of the Lord*, *Psal.* xxix. 3, &c. because by it God speaks to the children of men to fear before him, and it should put us in mind of that mighty word by which the world was at first made, which is called thunder, *Psal.* civ. 3. *At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away*, viz. the waters, when God said, *let them be gathered in one place.* They that are themselves affected with God's greatness should labour to affect others.

2. How he describes them. (1.) Their original, not their second causes, but the first, God directs the thunder and the lightning is his, *ver.* 3. Their production and motion is not from chance, but from the counsel of God, and under the direction and dominion of his providence, tho' to us they seem accidental and ungovernable. (2.) Their extent. The claps of thunder roll under the whole heaven, and are heard far and near,

so are the lightnings darted to the ends of the earth, they come out of the one part under heaven, and shine to the other, *Luke* xvii. 24. Tho' the same lightning and thunder doth not reach to all places, yet they reach to very distant places in a moment, and there is no place but some time or other has these alarms from heaven. (3.) Their order: the lightning is first directed, and after it a voice roars, *ver.* 4. The flash of fire and the noise it makes in a watry cloud are really at the same time, but because the motion of light is much quicker than that of sounds, we see the lightning some time before we hear the thunder, as we see the firing of a great gun at a distance before we hear the report of it. The thunder is here called the voice of God's excellency, because by it he proclaims his transcendent power and greatness. *He sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice*, *Psal.* lxxviii. 33. (4.) Their violence: he will not stay them, *i. e.* He doth not need to check them, or hold them back, lest they should grow unruly, and out of his power to restrain them, but lets them take their course, saith to them *go, and they go; come, and they come; do this, and they do it.* He will not stay the rains and showers that usually follow upon the thunder, which he had spoken of, *chap.* xxxvi. 27, 29. *so come; but will pour them out upon the earth, when his voice is heard.* Thunder showers are sweeping rains, and for them he *makes the lightnings*, *Psal.* xxxv. 7. (5.) The inference he draws from all this, *ver.* 5. Doth God thunder thus marvellously with his voice? We must then conclude that his other works are great, and such as we cannot comprehend: from this one instance we may argue to all, that in the dispensations of his providence there is that which is too great, too strong, for us to oppose or strive against, and too high, too deep for us to arraign or quarrel with.

6. For he saith to the snow, *Be thou on the earth*, likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength. 7. He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work. 8. Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places. 9. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. 10. By the breath of God, frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. 11. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud. 12. And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. 13. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.

The changes and extremities of the weather, wet or dry, hot or cold, is the subject of a great deal of our common talk and observation: but how seldom do we think and speak of these things, as Elihu doth here, with an awful regard to God the director of them, who shews his power, and serves the purposes of his providence by them? We must take notice of the glory of God not only in the thunder and lightning, but in the more common revolutions of the weather, which are not so terrible, and which makes less noise. As,

1. In the snow and rain, *ver.* 6. Thunder and lightning happen usually in the summer, but here he takes notice of the winter weather: then *he saith to the snow, be thou on the earth*: he commissions it, he commands it, he appoints it where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. He speaks, and it is done, as in the creation of the world; *let there be light*: so in the works of common providence, *snow, be thou on the earth.* Saying and doing are not two things with God, tho' they are with us. When he speaks the word, the small rain distils, and the great rain pours down as he pleaseth. The winter rain, so the LXX, for in these countries, when the winter was past, the rain was over and gone, *Cant.* ii. 11. The distinction in the Hebrew between the small rain and the great rain is this, that the former is called a shower of rain, the latter of rains, many showers in one: but all are the showers of his strength: the power of God is to be observed as much in the small rain that fokes into the earth, as in the great rain that batters on the house top, and washeth away all afore it. Note, The providence of God is to be acknowledged both by husbandmen in the fields, and travellers upon the road, in every shower of rain, whether it doth them a kindness or diskindness. It is sin and folly to contend with God's providence in the weather; if he send the snow or rain, can we hinder them? or shall we be angry at them? it is as absurd to quarrel with any other disposal of providence concerning ourselves or ours.

The effect of the extremity of the winter-weather is, that it both obligeth men and beasts to retire, making it uncomfortable and unsafe for them to go abroad. (1.) Men retire to their houses from their labours in the field, and keep within doors, *ver.* 7. *He seals up the hand of every man.* In frost and snow husbandmen cannot follow their business, nor some tradesmen, nor travellers, when the weather is extream: the plow is laid by, the shipping laid up, nothing to be done, nothing to be got, that men being taken off from their own work, may know his work, and

and contemplate that, and give him the glory of that; and by the consideration of that work of his in the weather which seals up their hands, be led to celebrate his other great and marvellous works. Note, When we are upon any account disabled to follow our worldly business, and taken off from it, we should spend our time rather in the exercises of piety and devotion, in acquainting ourselves with the works of God, and praising him in them, than in foolish idle sports and recreations. When our hands are sealed up, our hearts should be thus opened, and the less we have at any time to do in the world, the more we should do for God and our souls. When we are confined to our houses, we should thereby be driven to our bibles and our knees. (2.) The beasts also retire to their dens, and remain in their close places, *ver. 8.* It is meant of the wild beasts, which being wild must seek a shelter for themselves, to which by instinct they are directed, while the tame beasts, that are serviceable to man, are housed and protected by his care, as *Exod. ix. 20.* The ass has no den but his master's crib, and thither he goes, not only to be safe and warm, but to be fed. Nature directs all creatures to shelter themselves from a storm, and shall man only be unprovided of an ark?

2. In the winds, which blow from different quarters and produce different effects, *ver. 9.* Out of the hidden place (so it may be read) comes the whirlwind, it turns round, and so it is hard to say from which point it comes, but it comes from the secret chamber, as the word signifies, which I am not so willing to understand of the south, because he saith here, *ver. 17.* that the wind out of the south is so far from being a whirlwind, that it is a warming, quieting wind. But at this time, perhaps, Elihu saw a whirlwind-cloud coming out of the south, and making towards them, out of which the Lord spoke soon after, *chap. xxxviii. 1.* Or, if turbulent winds which bring showers, come out of the south, cold and drying blasts come out of the north to scatter the vapours, and clear the air of them.

3. In the frost, *ver. 10.* See the cause of it; it is given by the breath of God, *i. e.* by the word of his power, and command of his will; or as some understand it by the wind, which is the breath of God, as the thunder is his voice: it is caused by the cold freezing wind out of the north. See the effect of it: *the breadth of the waters is straitened, i. e.* the waters that had spread themselves, and flowed with a great deal of liberty are congealed, benumbed, arrested, bound up in crystal fetters. This is such an instance of the power of God, as if it were not common, would be next to a miracle.

4. In the clouds; the womb where all these watery meteors are conceived, of which he had spoken, *chap. xxxvi. 28.* Three sorts of clouds he here speaks of.

1. Close black thick clouds, pregnant with showers, and these with watering he wearies, *ver. 11. i. e.* They spend themselves, and are exhausted by the rain into which they melt and are dissolved, pouring out water until they are weary and can pour out no more: see what pains, as I may say, the creatures, even those above us, take to serve man: the clouds water the earth until they are weary; they spend and are spent for our benefit; which shames us and condemns us for the little good we do in our places, tho' it would be to our own advantage; for *he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.*

2. Bright thin clouds, clouds without water, these he scattereth, they are dispersed of themselves and not dissolved into rain, but what goes with them we know not. The bright cloud in the evening when the sky is red is scattered, and proves an earnest of a fair day, *Matth. xvi. 2.*

3. Flying clouds, which do not dissolve as the thick cloud into a close rain, but are carried upon the wings of the wind from place to place, dropping showers as they go, and these are said to be turned round about by his counsels, *ver. 12.* The common people say, the rain goes by planets, which is as bad divinity as it is philosophy, for it is guided and governed by the counsel of God, which extends itself even to those things that seem most casual and minute, *that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them,* for the stormy winds and clouds that are driven by them fulfil his word: and by this means he causeth it to rain upon one, city and not upon another, *Amos iv. 7, 8.* Thus his will is done upon the face of the world in the earth, *i. e.* among the children of men, to whom God has an eye in all these things, of whom it is said, that he made them to dwell on the face of all the earth, *Acts xvii. 26.* The inferior creatures being not capable of doing moral actions, are not capable of receiving rewards or punishments: but among the children of men God causeth the rain to come either for the correction of his land, or for mercy to it, *ver. 13.* (1.) Rain sometimes turns into a judgment; it is a scourge to a sinful land: as once it was for the destruction of the whole world, so it is now often for the correction or discipline of some parts of it, by hindring seedness and harvest, raising the waters, and damaging the fruits. Some have said that our nation has received much more prejudice by the excess of rain than by the want of it. (2.) At other times it is a blessing; it is for his land, that they may be made fruitful, and besides that which is just necessary, he gives for mercy to fatten it, and make it more fruitful. See what a necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given,

may be either a great mercy or a great judgment, and without God we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam.

14. Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. 15. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of the cloud to shine? 16. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? 17. How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south-wind? 18. Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass? 19. Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. 20. Shall it be told him that I speak? if a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.

Elihu here applies himself closely to Job, desiring him to apply what he had hitherto said to himself. He begs he would hearken to this discourse, *ver. 14.* that he would pause a while; *stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.* What we hear is not likely to profit us unless we consider it, and we are not likely to consider things fully unless we stand still, and compose ourselves to the consideration of them. The works of God being wondrous both deserve and need our consideration, and the due consideration of them will help to reconcile us to all his providences.

Elihu for the humbling of Job shews him,

1. That he had no insight at all into natural causes, could neither see the springs of them, nor foresee the effects of them, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* Dost thou know this, and know that, which are the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? We are here taught, (1.) The perfection of God's knowledge: it is one of the most glorious perfections of God that he is perfect in knowledge: it is omniscience. His knowledge is intuitive, he sees, and doth not know by report; it is intimate and intire. He knows things truly, and not by their colours, thoroughly, and not by piece-meal. To his knowledge there is nothing distant, but all near, nothing future, but all present, nothing hid, but all open. And we ought to acknowledge this in all his wondrous works, and it is sufficient to satisfy us in those wondrous works which we know not the meaning of, that they are the works of one that knows what he doth.

(2.) The imperfection of our knowledge. The greatest philosophers are much in the dark concerning the powers and works of nature. We are a paradox to ourselves, and every thing about us is a mystery. The gravitation of bodies, and the cohesion of the parts are most certain, and yet unaccountable. It is good for us to be made sensible of our own ignorance: some have confessed it, and those that would not, have betrayed it: but we must all infer from it what incompetent judges we are of the divine politicks, who understand so little even of the divine mechanics: (1.) We know not what orders God has given concerning the clouds, nor what orders he will give, *ver. 15.* That all is done by determination and with design we are sure, but what is determined and what designed, and when the plan was laid we know not. God often causeth the light of his cloud to shine; in the rainbow, so some; in the lightning, so others; but did we foresee, or could we foretell when he would do it? If we foresee the change of weather a few hours before, when second causes have begun to work by the weather-glass, or vulgar observation, yet how little doth that shew us of the purposes of God by these changes?

(2.) We know not how the clouds are poised in the air, the balancing of them, which is one of the wondrous works of God. They are so balanced, so spread as that they never rob us of the benefit of the sun, even the cloudy day is day: so balanced as that they do not fall at once, or burst into cataracts or water-spouts: the rainbow is an intimation of God's favour in balancing the clouds, so as to keep them from drowning the world. Nay, so are they balanced as that they impartially distribute their showers on the earth, so that one time or other every place has its share.

(3.) We know not how the comfortable change comes when the winter is past, *ver. 17.* (1.) How the weather becomes warm after it has been cold. We know how our garment came to be warm upon us, *i. e.* how we come to be warm in our clothes, by reason of the warmth of the air we breathe in. Without God's blessing we should clothe us and not be warm, *Hag. i. 6.* But when he so orders it, the clothes are warm upon us, which in the extremity of cold weather would not serve to keep us warm. (2.) How it becomes calm after it has been stormy; he quieteth the earth with the south-wind, when the spring comes. As he has a blustering freezing north-wind, so he has a thawing, composing, south-wind; the spirit is compared to both, because he both convinceth and comforteth, *Cant. iv. ult.*

2. That he had no share at all in the first making of the world, *ver. 18.* Hast thou with him spread out the sky? Thou canst not pretend to have stretched it out without him, no nor to have stretched it out in conjunction with him, for he was far from needing

needing any help, either in contriving or working. The creation of the vast expanse of the visible heavens (*Gen. i. 6, 7, 8.*) which we see in being to this day, is a glorious instance of the divine power, considering (1.) That tho' it is fluid, yet it is firm: It is strong, and has its name from its stability. It still is what it was, and suffers no decay, nor shall the ordinances of heaven be altered till the lease expires with time. (2.) That tho' it is large it is bright, and most curiously fine; it is a molten looking-glass, smooth and polished, and without the least flaw or crack: And in which as in a looking-glass, we may behold the glory of God, and the wisdom of his handy-work, *Psal. xix. 1.* When we look up to heaven above, we should remember it as a mirror, or looking-glass, not to shew us our own faces, but to be a faint representation of the purity, dignity, and brightness, of the upper world, and its glorious inhabitants.

3. That neither he nor they were able to speak of the glory of God in any proportion to the merit of the subject, *ver. 19, 20.* (1.) He challengeth Job to be their director, if he durst undertake it. He speaks it ironically, *Teach us, if thou canst, what we shall say unto him:* Thou hast a mind to reason with God, and wouldst have us to contend with him on thy behalf; teach us then what we shall say: Canst thou see further into this abyss than we can? If thou canst, favour us with the discoveries, furnish us with instructions. (2.) He owns his own insufficiency both in speaking to God, and in speaking of him; *We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* Note, The best of men are much in the dark concerning the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and the administrations of the divine government. They that thro' grace know much of God, yet it is little, it is nothing, in comparison with what is to be known, and what will be known, when that which is perfect is come, and the veil shall be rent. When we would speak of God, we speak confusedly, and with great uncertainty, and are presently at a loss, and run a-ground, not for want of matter, but for want of words: And as we must always begin with fear and trembling, lest we speak amiss, (*De Deo etiam vera dicere periculosum est*) so we must conclude with shame and blushing, that we have spoken no better. Elihu himself had for his part spoken very well on God's behalf, and yet is far from expecting a fee, or thinking God was beholden to him for it, or that he was fit to be standing counsel for him, that (1.) He is even ashamed of what he has said, not of the cause, but of his own management of it. *Shall it be told him that I speak?* Shall it be reported to him as a meritorious piece of service worthy his notice? By no means, let it never be spoken of, for he fears the subject has suffered by his undertaking it, as a fine face is wronged by an ill painter, and his performance is so far from meriting thanks, that it needs pardon. When we have done all we can for God, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants, and have nothing at all to boast of. He is afraid of saying any more. If a man speak, if he undertake to plead for God, much more if he offers to plead against him, surely he shall be swallowed up. If he speak presumptuously, God's wrath shall soon consume him, but if never so well, he will soon lose himself in the mystery, and be overpowered by the divine lustre. Astonishment will strike him blind and dumb.

21. And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth and cleanseth them. 22. Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty. 23. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict. 24. Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.

Elihu here concludes his discourse with some short, but great, sayings, concerning the glory of God, as that which he was himself possessed, and desired to possess others with a holy awe of. He speaks concisely, and in haste, because it should seem he perceived that God was about to take the work into his own hands.

1. He observes, that God who hath said he will dwell in the thick darkness, and make that his pavilion, (2 Chron. vi. 1. *Psal. xviii. 11.*) is in that awful chariot advancing towards them, as if he were preparing his throne for judgment, surrounded with clouds and darkness, *Psal. xcvi. 2.* to *ver. 9.* he saw the cloud with a whirlwind in the bosom of it, coming out of the south; but now it hung so thick, so black, over their heads, that they could none of them see the bright light, which just before was in the clouds: The light of the sun was now eclipsed; this minded him of the darkness, by reason of which he could not speak, *ver. 19.* and made him afraid to go on, *ver. 20.* Thus the disciples feared when they entered into a cloud, *Luke ix. 34.* yet he looks to the north, and sees it clear that way, which gives him hopes that the clouds are not gathering for a deluge, they are covered, but not surrounded with them: And he expects that the wind will pass (so it may be read) and cleanse them. Such a wind as passed over the earth to clear it from the waters of Noah's flood, (*Gen. viii. 1.*) in token of the return of God's favour, and then fair weather will come out of the north, *ver. 22.* and all will be well. God will not always frown, nor contend for ever.

2. He hastens to conclude, now God is about to speak; and therefore delivers much in a few words, as the sum of all that he had been discoursing of, which, if duly considered, would not only clench the nail he had been driving, but make way for what God would say.

1. That with God is terrible majesty: He is a God of glory, and such transcendent perfection as cannot but strike an awe upon all his attendants, and a terror upon all his adversaries. With God is terrible praise; so some; for he is fearful in praises, *Exod. xv. 11.*

2. That when we speak touching the Almighty, we must own that we cannot find him out; our finite understandings cannot comprehend his infinite perfections: Can we put the sea into an egg-shell? We cannot trace the steps he takes in his providence. *His way is in the sea.*

3. That he is excellent in power. It is the excellency of his power, that he can do whatever he pleaseth in heaven and earth. The universal extent and irresistible force of his power, are the excellency of it; no creature has an arm like him, so long, so strong.

4. That he is no less excellent in wisdom and righteousness; in judgment and plenty of justice; else there would be little excellency in his power. He that can do every thing, we may be sure will do every thing for the best, for he is infinitely wise, and will not in any thing do wrong, for he is infinitely just. When he executes judgments upon sinners, yet there is plenty of justice in it, and he inflicts not more than they deserve.

5. That he will not afflict, *i. e.* he will not afflict willingly; it is no pleasure to him to grieve the children of men, much less his own children: He never afflicts but when there is cause, and when there is need, and he doth not over-burthen us with affliction, but considers our frame. Some read it thus; The Almighty whom we cannot find out, is great in power, but he will not afflict in judgment, and plenty of justice, nor is extreme to mark what we do amiss.

6. He values not the censures of those that are wise in their own conceit. *He respecteth them not,* *ver. 24.* He will not alter his counsels to oblige them, nor can those that prescribe to him prevail with him to do as they would have him do. He regards the prayer of the humble, but not the policies of the crafty: No, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, *1 Cor. i. 25.*

Lastly, From all this it is easy to infer, that since God is great, he is greatly to be feared; nay, because he is gracious and will not afflict, men do therefore fear him, for there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared, *Psal. cxxx. 4.* It is the duty and interest of all men to fear God: Men shall fear him; so some. Sooner or later they shall fear him. They that will not fear the Lord and his goodness, shall for ever tremble under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

In most disputes the strife is who shall have the last word: Job's friends had in this controversy tamely yielded it to Job, and then he to Elihu: But after all the wranglings of the council at bar, the judge upon the bench must have the last word: so God had here, and so he will have in every controversy, for every man's judgment proceedeth from him, and by his definitive sentence every man must stand or fall, and every cause be won or lost. Job had often appealed to God, and had talked boldly how he would order his cause before him, and as a prince would he go near unto him; but when God took the throne, Job had nothing to say in his own defence, but was silent before him. It is not so easy a matter as some think it to contest with the Almighty: Job's friends had sometimes appealed to God too; O that God would speak! chap. xi. 5. And now at length God doth speak, when Job by Elihu's clear and close arguings was mollified a little, and mortified, and so prepared to hear what God had to say. It is the office of ministers to prepare the way of the Lord. That which the great God designs in this discourse is to humble Job, and bring him to repent of, and to recant his passionate indecent expressions concerning God's providential dealings with him; and this he doth by calling upon Job to compare God's eternity with his own time; God's omniscience with his own ignorance, and God's omnipotence with his own impotency.

1. He begins with an awakening challenge and demand in general, *ver. 2, 3.* 2. He proceeds in divers particular instances and proofs of Job's utter inability to contend with God, because of his ignorance and weakness; for (1.) He knew nothing of the founding of the earth, *ver. 4—7.* (2.) Nothing of the limiting of the sea, *ver. 8—11.* (3.) Nothing of the morning-light, *ver. 12—15.* (4.) Nothing of the dark recesses of the sea and earth, *ver. 16—21.* (5.) Nothing of the springs in the clouds, *ver. 22—27.* nor the secret counsels by which they are directed. (6.) He could do nothing towards the production of the rain, or frost, or lightning, *ver. 28, 30, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38.* Nothing towards the directing of the stars and their influences, *ver. 31, 33.* Nothing towards the making of his own soul, *ver. 36.* And lastly, he could not provide for the lions and the ravens, *ver. 39—41.* If in these ordinary works of nature Job was puzzled, how durst he pretend

pretend to dive into the counsels of God's government, and to judge of them? In this (as bishop Patrick observes) God takes up the argument begun by Elihu, (who came nearest to the truth) and prosecutes it in inimitable words, excelling his, and all other mens, in the loftiness of the stile, as much as thunder doth a whisper.

1. THEN the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 2. Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? 3. Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Let us observe here,

1. Who speaks; the Lord Jehovah, not a created angel, but the eternal Word himself, the second person in the blessed Trinity, for it is he by whom the worlds were made, and that was no other but the Son of God. The same speaks here that afterwards spoke from mount Sinai. Here he begins with the creation of the world, there with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, and from both is inferred the necessity of our subjection to him. Elihu had said that God speaks to men, and they do not perceive it, *chap. xxxiii. 14.* But this they could not but perceive, and yet we have a *more sure word of prophecy, 2 Pet i. 19.*

2. When he spoke. Then: When they had all had their saying, and yet had not gained their point, then it was time for God to interpose, whose judgment is according to truth. When we know not who is in the right, and perhaps are doubtful whether we our selves are, this may satisfy us that God will determine shortly in the valley of decision, *Joel iii. 14.* Job had silenced his three friends, and yet could not convince them of his integrity in the main; Elihu had silenced Job, and yet could not bring him to acknowledge his mismanagement of this dispute, but now God comes and doth both; convinceth Job first of his unadvised speaking, and makes him cry *peccavi*, and having humbled him, puts honour upon him, by convincing his three friends, that they had done him wrong. These two things God will sooner or later do for his people, he will shew them their faults, that they may be themselves ashamed of them, and he will shew others their righteousness, and bring it forth as the light, that they may be ashamed of their unjust censures of them.

3. How he spoke. Out of the whirlwind, the rolling and involving cloud, which Elihu took notice of, *chap. xxxvii. 1, 2, 9.* A whirlwind prefaced Ezekiel's vision, *Ezek. i. 4.* and Elijah's, *1 Kings xix. 11.* God is said to have his way in the whirlwind, *Nah. i. 3.* and to shew that even the stormy wind fulfils his word, here it was made the vehicle of it. This shews what a mighty voice God's is, that it was not lost, but perfectly audible, even in the noise of a whirlwind. Thus God designed to startle Job, and to command his attention. Sometimes God answers his own people in terrible corrections, as out of the whirlwind, but always in righteousness.

4. To whom he spoke. He answered Job, directed his speech to him, to convince him of what was amiss, before he cleared him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him. It is God only that can effectually convince of sin, and those shall so be humbled whom he designs to exalt. Those that desire to hear from God, as Job did, shall certainly hear from him at length.

5. What he said. We may conjecture that Elihu, or some other of the auditory, wrote down *verbatim* what was delivered out of the whirlwind, for we find, *Rev. x. 4.* that when the thunders uttered their voices, John was prepared to write: Or if it were not written then, yet the penman of the book being inspired by the Holy Ghost, we are sure that we have here a very true and exact report of what was said: *The Spirit (saith Christ) shall bring to your remembrance, as he did here, what I have said to you.*

The preface is very searching.

1. God charges him with ignorance and presumption in what he had said, *ver. 2.* Who is this that talks at this rate? Is it Job? What, a man? that weak foolish despicable creature, shall he pretend to prescribe to me what I must do, or to quarrel with me for what I have done? Is it Job? what my servant Job? a perfect and an upright man? Can he so far forget himself, and act unlike himself? who, where, is he that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge? Let him shew his face if he dare, and stand to what he hath said. Note, Darkning the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly, is a great affront and provocation to God. Concerning God's counsels, we must own that we are without knowledge. They are a deep which we cannot fathom, we are quite out of our element, out of our aim, when we pretend to account for them: And we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them, with a great deal of niceness and boldness: but alas we do but darken them instead of explaining them, we confound and perplex our selves and one another, when we dispute of the order of God's decrees, and the designs, and reasons, and methods of his operations of providence and grace. A humble faith, and sincere obedience, shall see further and better into the secret of the Lord, than all the philosophy of their schools, and the searches of science so called. This first word which God spoke is the more observable, because Job in his re-

No. xxxviii.

pentance fastens upon it as that which did his business, and humbled him, *chap. xlii. 3.* This he repeated and echoed to, as the arrow that stuck fast in him; I am the fool that have darkened counsel. There was some colour to have turned it upon Elihu, as if God meant him, for he spoke last, and was speaking when the whirlwind began, but Job applied it to himself, as becomes us to do, when faithful reproofs are given, and not (as most do) to billet them upon other people.

2. He challenges him to give such proofs of his knowledge, as would serve to justify his enquiries into the divine counsels, *ver. 3.* Gird up now thy loins like a stout man; prepare thy self for the encounter, I will demand of thee, will put some questions to thee, and answer me if thou canst, before I answer thine. Those that go about to call God to an account, must expect to be catechised, and called to an account themselves, that they may be made sensible of their ignorance and arrogance. God here puts Job in mind of what he had said, *chap. xiii. 22.* Call them and I will answer: Now make thy words good.

4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. 5. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof? 7. When the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. 8. Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb? 9. When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it, 10. And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, 11. And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.

For the humbling of Job, God here shews him his ignorance, even concerning the earth and the sea. Tho' so near, tho' so bulky, yet he could give no account of their origination; much less of heaven above, or hell beneath, which are at such a distance, or of the several parts of matter which are so minute, and then least of all of the divine counsels.

1. Concerning the founding of the earth. If he have such a mighty insight, as he pretends to have, into the counsels of God, let him give some account of the earth he goes upon, which is given to the children of men.

(1.) Let him tell where he was when this lower world was made, and whether he were advising or assisting in that wonderful work, *ver. 4.* Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Thy pretensions are high, canst thou pretend to this? Wast thou present when the world was made? See here (1.) The greatness and glory of God; *I laid the foundations of the earth.* This proves him to be the only living and true God, and a God of power, *Isa. lx. 21.* *Jer. x. 11, 12.* and encourageth us to trust in him at all times, *Isa. li. 13, 16.* (2.) The meanness, contemptibleness, of man. *Where wast thou then?* Thou that hast made such a figure among the children of the east, and settest up for an oracle, and a judge of the divine counsels, where wast thou when the foundations of the earth were laid? So far were we from having any hand in the creation of the world, which might entitle us to a dominion in it, or so much as being witnesses of it, by which we might have gained an insight into it, that we were not then in being. The first man was not, much less were we. It is the honour of Christ that he was present when this was done, *Prov. viii. 22, &c.* *John i. 1, 2.* But *we are of yesterday and know nothing.* Let us not therefore find fault with the works of God, nor prescribe to him: He did not consult us in making the world, and yet it is well made, why should we expect then that he should take his measures from us in governing it?

(2.) Let him describe how this world was made, and give a particular account of the manner and method in which this strong and stately edifice was formed and erected: Declare, if thou hast so much understanding as thou fanciest thy self to have, what were the advances of that work. Those that pretend to have understanding above others, ought to give proof of it; shew me thy faith by thy works, thy knowledge by thy words. Let Job declare if he can,

1. How the world came to be so finely framed, with so much exactness, and such an admirable symmetry and proportion of all the parts of it, *ver. 5.* Stand forth and tell who laid the measures thereof, and stretched out the line upon it. Wast thou the architect that didst form the model, and then draw the dimensions by rule according to it. The vast bulk of the earth is moulded as regularly as if it had been done by line and measure; but who can describe how it was cast into this figure? who determine its circumference and diameter, and all the lines that are drawn on the terrestrial globe? It is to this day a dispute whether the earth stands still or turns round, how then can we determine by what measures it was first formed?

2. How it came to be so firmly fixed. Tho' it is hung upon nothing, yet it is established that it cannot be moved; but who can tell upon what the foundations of it are fastned, that it may not sink with its own weight; or who laid the corner-stone thereof, that the parts of it may not fall asunder, *ver. 6. What God doth it shall be for ever*, Eccles. iii. 14. And therefore as we cannot find fault with God's work, so we need not be in fear concerning it, it will last and answer the end; the works of his providence, as well as the work of creation; the measures of neither can ever be broke; and the work of redemption is no less firm, of which Christ himself is both the foundation and the corner stone. The church stands as fast as the earth.

(3.) Let him repeat, if he can, the songs of praise which were sung at that solemnity, *ver. 7. When the morning stars sang together*, the blessed angels, the first-born of the Father of light, who in the morning of time shone so bright, as the morning-star, going immediately before the light which God commanded to shine out of darkness upon the seeds of this lower world, the earth, which was without form and void. They were the sons of God which shouted for joy, when they saw the foundations of the earth laid, because tho' it was not made for them, but for the children of men, and tho' it would increase their work and service, yet they knew the eternal Wisdom and Word, whom they were to worship, (*Heb. i. 6.*) would rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and much of his delight would be in the sons of men, *Prov. viii. 31.* The angels are called the sons of God, because they bear much of his image, are with him in his house above, and serve him as a son doth his father. Now observe here, (1.) The glory of God, as the creator of the world, is to be celebrated with joy and triumph by all his reasonable creatures; for they are qualified and appointed to be the collectors of his praises, from the inferior creatures, who can only praise him objectively. (2.) The work of angels is to praise God; and the more we abound in holy, humble, thankful, joyful, praise, the more we do the will of God as they do it, and when we are so barren and defective in praising God, it is a comfort to think that they are doing it in a better manner. (3.) They were unanimous in singing God's praises: They sung together with one accord, and there was no jar in their harmony. The sweetest comforts are in praising God. (4.) They all did it, even those that afterwards fell, and left their first estate; even those who have praised God, may by the deceitful power of sin be brought to blaspheme him, and yet God will be eternally praised.

2. Concerning the limiting of the sea to the place appointed for it, *ver. 8, &c.* This refers to the third day's work, when God said, *Gen. i. 9. Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so.*

(1.) Out of the great deep or chaos, in which earth and water were intermixed, in obedience to the divine command the waters brake forth like a child out of the teeming womb, *ver. 8.* Then the waters that had covered the deep, and stood above the mountains, retired with precipitation. At God's rebuke they fled, *Psal. civ. 6, 7.*

(2.) This new-born babe is clothed and swaddled, *ver. 9.* The cloud is made the garment thereof, with which it is covered, and thick darkness, *i. e.* Shores vastly remote and distant from one another, and quite in the dark one to another, are a swaddling band for it. See with what ease the great God manageth the raging sea; notwithstanding the violence of its tides, and strength of its billows, he manageth it as the nurse doth the child in swaddling clothes. It is not said he made rocks and mountains its swaddling bands, but clouds and darkness; something that we are not aware of, and would think least likely for such a purpose.

(3.) There is a cradle too provided for this babe, *I brake up for it my decreed place*, *ver. 10.* Vallies were sunk for it in the earth, capacious enough to receive it, and there it is laid to sleep, and if it be sometimes tossed with winds, that (as bishop Patrick observes) is but the rocking of the cradle, which makes it sleep the faster. As for the sea, so for every one of us there is a decreed place, for he that determined the times before appointed, determined also the bounds of our habitation.

(4.) This babe being made unruly and dangerous by the sin of man, which was the original of all unquietness and danger in this lower world, there is also a prison provided for it; *bars and doors are set*, *ver. 10.* And it is said to it by way of check to its insolence, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther.* The sea is God's, for he made it, he restrains it; he saith to it, *Here shall thy proud waves be staid*, *ver. 11.* This may be considered as an act of God's power over the sea, tho' so vast a body, and its motion sometimes extremely violent, yet God has it under check; its waves rise no higher; its tides roll no further than God permits, and it is mentioned as a reason why we should stand in awe of God, *Jer. v. 22.* and yet why we should encourage our selves in him, for he that stops the noise of the sea, even the noise of her waves, can when he pleaseth still the tumult of the people, *Psal. lxxv. 7.* It is also to be looked upon as an act of God's mercy to the world of mankind, and an instance of his patience towards that provoking race; tho' he could easily cover the earth again with the waters of the sea, (and methinks every flowing tide twice a day threatens us, and shews what the sea could do, and would do, if

God would give it leave) yet he restrains them, being not willing that any should perish, and having reserved the world that now is unto fire, *2 Pet. iii. 7.*

12. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days? and caused the day-spring to know his place, *13.* That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? *14.* It is turned as clay to the seal, and they stand as a garment. *15.* And from the wicked their light is with-holden, and the high arm shall be broken. *16.* Hast thou entred into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? *17.* Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? *18.* Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare, if thou knowest it all. *19.* Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, *20.* That thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldst know the paths to the house thereof? *21.* Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? *22.* Hast thou entred into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, *23.* Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? *24.* By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east-wind upon the earth?

The Lord proceeds here to ask Job a great many very puzzling questions, to convince him of his ignorance, and so to shame him for his folly, in prescribing to God. If we will but pose our selves with such interrogatories as these, we shall soon be brought to own that what we know, is nothing in comparison with that which we know not.

Job is here challenged to give an account of six things,

1. Of the springs of the morning, the day-spring from on high, *ver. 12, 13, 14, 15.* As there is no visible being of which we may be more firmly assured that it is, so there is none which we are more puzzled in describing, nor more doubtful in determining what it is, than the light. We welcome the morning, and are glad of the day-spring; but (1.) It is not commanded since our days, but what it is it was long before we were born, so that it was neither made by us, nor designed primarily for us, but we take it as we find it, and as the many generations had it that went before us. The day-spring knew its place before we knew ours, for we are but of yesterday. (2.) It was not we, it was not any man that commanded the morning light at first, nor appointed the place of its springing up, and shining forth, nor the time of it. The constant and regular succession of day and night, was no contrivance of ours, it is the glory of God that it shews, and his handy-work, not ours, *Psal. xix. 1, 2.* (3.) It is quite out of our power to alter this course. Hast thou countermanded the morning since thy days? Hast thou at any time raised the morning light sooner than its appointed time, to serve thy purpose when thou hast waited for the morning, or ordered the day-spring for thy convenience to any other place but its own? no, never; Why then wilt thou pretend to direct the divine counsels, or expect to have the methods of providence altered in favour of thee? We may as soon break the covenant of the day and of the night, as any part of God's covenant with his people, and particularly that *I will chasten them with the rod of men.* (4.) It is God that has appointed the day-spring to visit the earth, and diffuseth the morning light through the air, which receives it as readily as the clay doth the seal, (*ver. 14.*) immediately admitting the impressions of it, so as of a sudden to be all over enlightened by it, as the seal stamps its image on the wax; and they stand as a garment, or as if they were clothed with a garment. The earth puts on a new face every morning, and dresseth it self, as we do, puts on light as a garment, and is then to be seen. (5.) This is made a terror to evil doers. Nothing more comfortable to mankind than the light of the morning, it is pleasant to the eyes, it is serviceable to life and the business of it, and the favour of it is universally extended, for it takes hold of the ends of the earth; and how welcome it is to the earth, is what we should dwell upon in our hymns to the light: but God here observes how unwelcome it is to those that do evil, and therefore hate the light. God makes the light a minister of his justice as well as of his mercy; it is designed to shake the wicked out of the earth, and for that purpose it takes hold of the ends of it, as we take hold of the ends of a garment to shake the dust and moths out of it. Job had observed what a terror the morning light is to criminals, because it discovers them, *chap. xxiv. 13, &c.* and God here seconds the observation, and asks him whether the world was indebted to him for that kindness? No, the great Judge of the world sends forth the beams of the morning light, as his messengers to detect criminals, that they may not only be defeated in their purposes, and put to shame; but that they may be brought to condign punishment, *ver. 15.* that their light may be with-holden from them, *i. e.* that they may lose

lose their comfort, their confidence, their liberties, their lives, and that their high arm, which they have lifted up against God and man, may be broken, and they deprived of their power to do mischief. Whether what is here said of the morning light was designed to represent, as in a figure, the light of the gospel of Christ, and to give a type of it, I will not say, but I am sure it may serve to put us in mind of the encomiums given to the gospel, just at the rising of its morning star, by Zecharias in his Benediculus, *Luke i. 78.* By the tender mercy of our God the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, whose hearts are turned to it as clay to the seal, *2 Cor. iv. 6.* And by the virgin Mary in her Magnificat, *Luke i. 51.* shewing that God in his gospel hath shewed strength with his arm, scattered the proud, and put down the mighty, by that light he designed to shake the wicked, to shake wickedness it self out of the earth, and break its high arm.

2. Of the springs of the sea, *ver. 16.* Hast thou entred into them, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? knowest thou what lies in the bottom of the sea, the treasures there hid in the sands? or canst thou give an account of the rise and original of the waters of the sea? Vapours are continually exhaled out of the sea; Dost thou know how the recruits are raised by which it is continually supplied? Rivers are constantly poured into the sea; Dost thou know how they are continually discharged, so as not to overflow the earth? Art thou acquainted with the secret subterraneous passages, by which the waters circulate? God's way in the government of the world, is said to be *in the sea, and in the great waters*, *Psal. lxxvii. 19.* intimating that it is hid from us, and not to be pried into by us.

3. Of the gates of death: *Have those been opened to thee?* *ver. 16.* Death is a grand secret. (1.) We know not before hand when and how, and by what means we or others shall be brought to death; by what road we must go the way whence we shall not return; what disease or what disaster, will be the door to let us into the house appointed for all living; *Man knows not his time.* (2.) We cannot describe what death is, how the knot is untied between body and soul, nor how the spirit of a man goes upward, *Eccles. iii. 21.* to be we know not what, and live we know not how, as Mr Norris expresseth it; with what dreadful curiosity (saith he) doth the soul launch out into the vast ocean of eternity, and resign to an untried abyss? Let us make it sure that the gates of heaven shall be opened to us on the other side death, and then we need not fear the opening of the gates of death, tho' it is a way we are to go but once. (3.) We have no correspondence at all with separate souls, nor any acquaintance with their state. It is an unknown, undiscovered, region to which they are removed, we can neither hear from them, nor send to them. While we are here in a world of sense, we speak of the world of spirits, as blind men do of colours, and when we remove thither, shall be amazed to find how much we were mistaken.

4. Of the breadth of the earth, *ver. 18.* Hast thou perceived that? The knowledge of this might seem most level to him, and within his reach, yet he is challenged to declare this if he can: We have our residence on the earth, God has given it to the children of men; but whoever surveyed it, or could give an account of the number of its acres? It is but a point to the universe, yet as small as it is, we cannot be exact in declaring the dimensions of it. Job had never sailed round the world, nor any before him; so little did men know the breadth of the earth, that it was but a few ages ago that the vast continent of America was discovered, which had time out of mind laid hid. The divine perfection is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, it is therefore presumption for us, who perceive not the breadth of the earth, to dive into the depth of God's counsels.

5. Of the place and way of light and darkness. Of the day-spring he had spoken before, *ver. 12.* and he returns to speak to it again, *ver. 19.* Where is the way where light dwells? and again, *ver. 24.* By what way is the light parted? He challengeth him to describe,

1. How the light and darkness were at first made; when God in the beginning first spread darkness upon the face of the deep, and afterwards commanded the light to shine out of darkness, by that mighty word, *let there be light*, was Job a witness to the order, to the operation; can he tell where the fountains of light and darkness are, and where those mighty princes keep their courts distinct, while in one world they rule alternately? Tho' we long never so much either for the shining forth of the morning, or the shadows of the evening, we know not whither to send or go to fetch them, nor can tell the paths to the house thereof, *ver. 20.* We were not then born, nor is the number of our days so great that we can describe the birth of that first-born of the visible creation, *ver. 21.* Shall we then undertake to discourse of God's counsels, which were from eternity, or to find out the paths to the house thereof, to solicit for the alteration of them? God glories in it that he forms the light, and creates the darkness, and if we must take those as we find them, take those as they come, and quarrel with neither, but make the best of both; then we must in like manner accommodate our selves to the peace and the evil which God likewise created, *Isa. xlv. 7.*

2. How they still keep their turns interchangeably. It is God that makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice,

Psal. lxxv. 8. for it is his order, and no order of ours that is executed by the out-goings of the morning light, and the darkness of the night. We cannot so much as tell from whence they come, or whither they go, *ver. 24.* By what way is the light parted, in the morning, when in an instant it shoots it self into all the parts of the air, above the horizon, as if the morning light flew upon the wings of an east-wind, so swiftly, so strongly, is it carried, scattering the darkness of the night, as the east-wind doth the clouds. Hence we read of the wings of the morning, *Psal. cxxxix. 9.* on which the light is conveyed to the uttermost parts of the sea, and scattered like an east-wind upon the earth. It is a mighty change that passeth over us every morning by the return of the light, and every evening by the return of the darkness, but we expect them, and so they are no surprize or uneasiness to us: If we would in like manner count upon changes in our outward condition, we should neither in the brightest noon count upon perpetual day, nor in the darkest midnight despair of the return of the morning: God hath set the one over against the other, like the day and night, and so must we, *Eccl. vii. 14.*

6. Of the treasures of the snow and hail, *ver. 22, 23.* Hast thou entred into those, and taken a view of them? In the clouds the snow and hail are generated, and thence they come in such abundance, that one would think there were treasures of them laid up in store there, whereas indeed they are suddenly produced, *extempore*, as I may say, and *pro re nata*. And sometimes they come so opportunely to serve the purposes of providence, in God's fighting for his people, and against his and their enemies, that one would think they were laid up as magazines, or stores of arms, ammunition and provisions, against the time of trouble, the day of battle and war: When God will either contend with the world in general, as in the deluge, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters fetched out of these treasures to drown a wicked world, that waged war with heaven, or with some particular persons or parties, as when God out of these treasures fetched great hail-stones wherewith to fight against the Canaanites, *Josh. x. 11.* See what folly it is to strive against God, who is thus prepared for battle and war, and how much it is our interest to make our peace with him, and to keep ourselves in his love. God can fight as effectually with snow and hail, if he pleases, as with thunder and lightning, or the sword of an angel.

25. Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters? or a way for the lightning of thunder, 26. To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness wherein there is no man? 27. To satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? 28. Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of the dew? 29. Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendred it? 30. The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. 31. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? 32. Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? 33. Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? 34. Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? 35. Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? 36. Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? 37. Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, 38. When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together? 39. Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, 40. When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? 41. Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

Hitherto God had put such questions to Job, as were proper to convince him of his ignorance and short-sightedness. - Now he comes in the same manner to shew his impotency and weakness: As it is but little that he knows, and therefore he ought not to arraign the divine counsels, so it is but little he can do, and therefore he ought not to oppose the proceedings of providence. Let him consider what great things God doth, and try whether he can do the like, or whether he thinks himself an equal match for him.

1. God has thunder and lightning, and rain, and frost at command, but Job has not, and therefore let him not dare to compare with God, or to contest with him. Nothing is more uncertain than what weather it shall be; nor more out of our reach to appoint, but it shall be what weather pleaseth God, not what pleaseth us, unless as becomes us, whatever pleaseth God pleaseth us. Concerning this, observe here, 1. How great God is. (1.) He has a sovereign

sovereign dominion over the waters, has appointed them their course, even then when they seem to overflow, and to be from under his check, *ver.* 25. He has divided a water-course, directs the rain where to fall; even when the shower is most violent, with as much certainty as if it were conveyed by canals, or conduit-pipes: Thus the hearts of kings are said to be in God's hand, and as the rains, those rivers of God, he turneth them whithersoever he will. Every drop goes as it is directed. God has sworn, *that the waters of Noah shall no more return to cover the earth*: And we see he is able to make good what he has promised, for he has the rain in a water-course. (2.) He hath so over the lightning and the thunder, which go not at random, but in the way that he directs them. And they are mentioned here because he *prepares the lightnings for the rain*, *Psal.* cxxxv. 7. Let not those that fear God be afraid of the lightning or the thunder, for they are not blind bullets, but go the way that God himself directs them, who means no hurt to them. (3.) In directing the course of the rain he doth not neglect the wilderness, not the desert land, *ver.* 26, 27. *where no man is*: (1.) No man to be employed in taking care of the products. God's providence reaches further than man's industry: if he had not more kindness for many of the inferior creatures than man has, it would go ill with them. God can make the earth fruitful without any art or pains of ours, as *Gen.* ii. 5, 6. when *there was not a man to till the ground*, yet there went up a mist and watered it: But we cannot make it fruitful without God, it is he that gives the increase. (2.) Where there is no man to be provided for, or to take the benefit of the fruits that are produced. Tho' God doth with a very peculiar favour visit and regard man, yet he doth not overlook the inferior creatures, but causeth *the bud of the tender herb to spring forth for food for all flesh*, as well as *for the service of man*. Even the wild asses shall have their thirst quenched, *Psal.* civ. 11. God has enough for all, and wonderfully provides even for those creatures that man neither hath service from, nor makes provision for. (4.) He is in a sense *the father of the rain*, *ver.* 28. It has no other father: He produceth it by his power, he governs and directs it, and makes what use he pleaseth of it. Even the small drops of the dew he distils upon the earth, as the God of nature, and as the God of grace rains righteousness upon us, and is himself as the dew unto Israel, see *Hos.* xiv. 5, 6. *Mic.* v. 7. (5.) The ice and the frost by which the waters are congealed, and the earth incrustated are produced by his providence, *ver.* 29, 30. These are very common things, which lessens the strangeness of them: But considering what a mighty change is made by them in a very little time, how the waters are hid as with a stone, as with a grave-stone laid upon them: So thick, so strong is the ice that covers them, and the face even of the deep is sometimes frozen. We may well ask, Out of whose womb came the ice? What created power could produce such a wonderful work? No power but that of the Creator himself. Frost and snow come from him, and therefore should lead our thoughts and meditations to him, who doth such great things past finding out: And we shall the easier bear the inconveniences of winter weather if we learn to make this good use of it. 2. Observe, How weak man is; can he do such things as these? could Job? No, *ver.* 35, 36. (1.) He cannot command one shower of rain for the relief of himself or his friends. *Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds*, those bottles of heaven, *that abundance of waters may cover thee*, to water thy fields when they are dry and parched? If we lift up our voice to God to pray for rain we may have it, *Zech.* x. 1. But if we lift up our voice to the clouds to demand it, they will soon tell us they are not at our beck, and we shall go without it, *Jer.* xiv. ult. The heavens will not hear the earth, unless God hear them, *Hos.* ii. 21. See what poor indigent depending creatures we are, we cannot do without rain, nor can we have it when we will. (2.) He cannot commission one flash of lightning, if he had a mind to make use of it for the terror of his enemies, *ver.* 35. *Canst thou send lightnings that they may go on thine errand*, and do the execution thou wishest for? Will they come at thy call, and say unto thee, Here we are? No, the ministers of God's wrath will not be ministers of ours: Why should they, since the *wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*? see *Luke* ix. 55.

2. God has the stars of heaven under his command and cognizance, and that we have not. Our meditations are now to rise higher, far above the clouds, to the glorious lights above. He instanceth not in the planets, which move in lower orbs, but in the fixed stars, which are much higher. It is supposed that they have an influence upon this earth, notwithstanding their vast distance, not upon the minds of men, or the events of providence: Mens fate is not determined by their stars, but upon the ordinary course of nature, they are set for signs and seasons, for days and years, *Gen.* i. 14. And if the stars have such a dominion over this earth, as it is called here, *ver.* 33. tho' they have their place in the heavens, and are but meer matter, much more has he who is their maker, and ours, and who is an eternal mind. Now see how weak we are, (1.) We cannot alter the influences of the stars, *ver.* 31. not theirs that are instrumental to produce the pleasures of the spring, *Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?* the seven stars, that constellation

which lies in so small a compass (none in less) and yet sheds very benign influences upon the earth: Nor can we alter theirs that introduce the rigour of the winter: *Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?* that magnificent constellation that makes so great a figure, (none greater) dispenseth rough and unpleasing influences which we cannot control or repel. Both summer and winter will have their course; God can change them when he pleaseth, can make the spring cold, and so bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, and the winter warm, and so loose the bands of Orion, but we cannot. (2.) It is not in our power to order the motions of the stars, nor are we entrusted with the conduct of them. God, who *calleth the stars by their names*, *Psal.* cxlvii. 4. calls them forth in their respective seasons, appoints them the time of their rising and setting, but this is none of our province, we cannot bring forth Mazzaroth, the stars in the southern signs, nor guide Arcturus, those in the northern, *ver.* 32. God can bring forth the stars to battle, as he did when in their courses they fought against Sisera, and guide them in the attacks they are ordered to make; but man cannot do so. (3.) We are not only unconcerned in the government of the stars (the government they are under, and the government they are entrusted with, for they both rule and are ruled) but utterly unacquainted with it, we *know not the ordinances of heaven*, *ver.* 33. So far are we from being able to change them, that we can give no account of them: They are a secret to us: Shall we then pretend to know God's counsels, and the reasons of them? If it were left to us to set the dominion of the stars upon the earth, we should soon be at a loss. Shall we then teach God how to govern the world?

3. God is the author and giver, the father and fountain, of all wisdom and understanding, *ver.* 36. The souls of men are nobler, and more excellent beings than the stars of heaven themselves and shine brighter: The powers and faculties of reason with which man is endued, and the wonderful performances of thought, bring him into some alliance to the blessed angels, and whence comes this light but from the Father of lights? Who but he hath put wisdom into the inward parts of man, and given understanding to the heart? (1.) The rational soul itself, and its capacities come from him as the God of nature, for he formeth the spirit of man within him. We did not make our own souls, nor can we describe how they act, or how they are united to our bodies. He only that made them knows them, and knows how to manage them: he fashioneth mens hearts alike in some things, and yet unlike in others. (2.) True wisdom, its furniture and improvement come from him as the God of grace, and the founder of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, who have all our wisdom from him? Nay, shall we pretend to be wise above our sphere, and beyond the limits which he that gave us our understanding sets to it? He designed we should with it serve God and do our duty, but never intended we should with it set up for directors of the stars or the lightning.

4. God has the clouds under his cognizance and government, but so have not we, *ver.* 37. Can any man with all his wisdom undertake to number the clouds? Or (as it may be read) to declare and describe the nature of them? Tho' they are near us, in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them, than of the stars which are at so great a distance: And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that *the dust grows into solid mire*, and *the clods cleave fast together*, *ver.* 38. *Who can stay the bottles of heaven?* Who can stop them, that it may not always rain? The power and goodness of God is herein to be acknowledged that he gives the earth rain enough, but doth not surfeit it; softens it, but doth not drown it; makes it fit for the plow, but not unfit for the seed. As we cannot command a shower of rain, so we cannot command a fair day without God, so necessary, so constant, is our dependence upon him.

5. God provides food for the inferior creatures, and it is by his providence, not by any care or pains of ours that they are fed. The following chapter is wholly taken up with the instances of God's power and goodness about animals, and therefore some transfer the three last verses of this chapter to it, which speak of the provision made.

1. For the lions, *ver.* 39, 40. Thou dost not pretend that the clouds and stars have any dependence upon thee, for they are above thee; but on the earth thou thinkest thy self paramount, let us try that then; *Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?* Thou valuest thy self upon thy possessions of cattle which thou wast once owner of, the oxen, and asses, and camels that were fed at thy crib: But wilt thou undertake the maintenance of the lions and the young lions when they couch in their dens, waiting for a prey? No, thou needest not do it, they can shift for themselves without thee: Thou canst not do it, for thou hast not wherewithal to satisfy them: thou darest not do it, shouldst thou come to feed them, they would upon thee: But I do it. See the all-sufficiency of the divine providence: It has wherewithal to satisfy the desire of every living thing, even the most ravenous: See the bounty of the divine providence, that wherever it has given life will give livelihood, even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable but dangerous to man. And see its sovereignty,

reignty, that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures: the harmless sheep are torn to pieces to fill the appetite of the young lions, who yet sometimes are made to lack and suffer hunger, to punish them for their cruelty, while those that fear God want no good thing.

2. For the young ravens, *ver. 41.* As ravenous beasts so ravenous birds are fed by the divine providence. Who but God provides for the raven his food? Man doth not, he takes care only of those creatures that are or may be useful to him: But God has a regard to all the works of his hands, even the meanest and least valuable. The ravens, young ones, are in a special manner necessitous, and God supplies them, *Psal. cxlvii. 9.* God's feeding the fowls, especially these fowls, (*Matt. vi. 26.*) is an encouragement to us to trust him for our daily bread. See here, (1.) What distress the young ravens are often in, they wander for lack of meat: The old ones, they say, neglect them, and do not provide for them as other birds do for their young: and indeed those that are ravenous to others, are commonly barbarous to their own, and unnatural. (2.) What they are supposed to do in that distress, they cry, for they are noisy, clamorous creatures, and this is interpreted crying to God: It being the bond of nature, it is looked upon as directed to the God of nature. The putting of so favourable a construction as this upon the cries of the young ravens may encourage us in our prayers, tho' we can but cry, Abba, Father. (3.) What God doth for them. Some way or other he provides for them, so that they grow up, and come to maturity. And he that takes this care of the young ravens, certainly will not be wanting to his people or theirs. This being but one instance of many of the divine compassion, may give us occasion to think how much good our God doth every day beyond what we are aware of.

CHAP. XXXIX.

God proceeds here to shew Job what little reason he had to charge him with unkindness, who was so compassionate to the inferior creatures, and took such a tender care of them, or to boast of himself, and his own good deeds before God, which were nothing to the divine mercies: He shews him also what great reason he had to be humble, who knew so little of the nature of the creatures about him, and had so little influence upon them, and to submit to that God on whom they all depend. He discourseth particularly, (1.) Concerning the wild goats and the hinds, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) Concerning the wild ass, *ver. 5—8.* (3.) Concerning the unicorn, *ver. 9—12.* (4.) Concerning the peacock, *ver. 13.* (5.) Concerning the ostrich, *ver. 13—18.* (6.) Concerning the horse, *ver. 19—25.* (7.) Concerning the hawk and the eagle, *ver. 26—30.*

1. **K**NOWEST thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? 2. Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? 3. They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. 4. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn: they go forth, and return not unto them. 5. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? 6. Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land the dwellings. 7. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. 8. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. 9. Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? 10. Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? 11. Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? 12. Wilt thou believe him that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?

God here shews Job what little acquaintance he had with the untamed creatures that run wild in the deserts, and lived at large, but were the care of the divine providence. As,

1. The wild goats and the hinds. That which is taken notice of concerning them, is the bringing forth, and bringing up of their young ones. For as every individual is fed, so every species of animals is preserved by the care of the divine providence, and for ought we know, none extinct to this day. Observe here,

1. Concerning the production of their young. (1.) Man is wholly ignorant of the time when they bring forth, *ver. 1, 2.* Shall we pretend to tell what is in the womb of providence, or what a day will bring forth, who know not the time of the pregnancy of a hind, or a wild goat? (2.) Tho' they bring forth their young with a great deal of difficulty and sorrow, and have no assistance from man, yet by the good providence of God

No. xxxviii.

they get thro' it, their young ones are safely produced, and their sorrows cast out and forgotten, *ver. 3.* Some think it is intimated, *Psal. xxix. 9.* that God by thunder helps the hinds in calving. Let it be observed for the comfort of women in labour, that God helps even the hinds to bring forth their young, and shall he not much more succour them, and save them in child-bearing, who are his children in covenant with him?

2. Concerning the growth of their young, *ver. 4.* They are in good liking, tho' they are brought forth in sorrow, after their dams have suckled them a while, they shift for themselves in the corn-fields, and are no more burthenome to them, which is an example to children when they are grown up, not to be always hanging upon their parents, and craving from them, but to put forth themselves to get their own livelihood, and to requite their parents.

2. The wild ass. A creature we frequently read of in scripture; some say untameable: Man is said to be born as the wild ass's colt, so hard to be governed. Three things providence has allotted to the wild ass. (1.) An unbounded liberty, *ver. 5.* Who, but God, hath sent out the wild ass free? He hath given a disposition to it, and therefore a dispensation for it. The tame ass is bound to labour, the wild ass has no bonds on him. Note, Freedom from service and liberty to range at pleasure is but the privilege of a wild ass: It is a pity any of the children of men should covet it, or value themselves by it. It is better labour and be good for something, than ramble and be good for nothing. But if among men providence sets some at liberty, and suffers them to live at ease, while others are doomed to servitude, we must not marvel at the matter, it is so among the brute creatures. (2.) An unclosed lodging, *ver. 6.* Whose house I have made the wilderness, where he has room enough to traverse his ways, and snuff up the wind at his pleasure, as the wild ass is said to do, *Jer. ii. 24.* as if he were to live upon air, for it is the barren land that is his dwelling. Observe, The tame ass that labours and is serviceable to man, has his master's crib to go to both for shelter and food, and lives in a fruitful land: But the wild ass that will have his liberty must have it in a barren land: He that will not labour let him not eat. He that will, shall eat the labour of his hands, and have also to give to him that needeth. Jacob the shepherd has good red potage to spare, when Esau a sportsman was ready to perish for hunger. A further description of the liberty and livelihood of the wild ass we have, *ver. 7, 8.* (1.) He has no owner, nor will he be in subjection: he scorneth the multitude of the city: If they attempt to take him, and in order to that surround him with a multitude, he will soon get clear of them, and the crying of the driver is nothing to him. He laughs at those that live in the tumult and bustle of cities, (so bishop Patrick) thinking himself happier in the wilderness: and opinion is the rate of things. (2.) Having no owner he has no feeder, nor is any provision made for him, but he must shift for himself; the range of the mountains is his pasture, and a bare pasture it is; there he searcheth after here and there a green thing as he can find it and pick it up; whereas the labouring asses have green things in plenty, without their searching for them. From the untameableness of this and other creatures we may infer how unfit we are to give law to providence who cannot give law even to a wild ass's colt.

3. The unicorn. *Rhem.* A strong creature, *Numb. xxiii. 22.* a stately proud creature, *Psal. xcii. 10.* He is able to serve, but not willing, and God here challenges Job to force him to it: Job expected every thing should be just as he would have it. Since thou dost pretend (saith God) to bring every thing to thy bow, begin with the unicorn, and try thy skill upon him. Now thine oxen and asses are all gone, try whether he will be willing to serve thee in their stead, (*ver. 9.*) and whether he will take up with the provision thou usest to make for them: *Will he abide by thy crib?* No, (1.) Thou canst not tame him, nor bind him with his band, nor set him to draw the harrow, *ver. 10.* There are creatures that are willing to serve man, and seem to take a pleasure in it, and to have a love for their masters: But there are such as will never be brought to it; and it is the effect of sin; man is revolted from his subjection to his Maker, and is therefore justly punished with the revolt of the inferior creatures from their subjection to him; and yet, as an instance of God's good-will to man, there are some that are still serviceable to him. Tho' the wild bull (which some think is meant here by the unicorn) will not serve man, nor submit to his band in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not *feræ naturæ*, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is intitled. *Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him?* (2.) Thou dardest not trust him: tho' his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost with thine asses or oxen, whom a little child may lead or drive, leaving to them all the pains. Thou wilt never depend upon the wild bull, as likely to come to thy harvest work, much less to go through it, to bring home thy seed, and to gather it into thy barn, *ver. 11, 12.* And because he will not serve about the corn, he wants the many good bits which the tame ox hath, whose mouth was not to be muzzled in treading out the corn: But therefore he will not draw the plow,

plow, because he that made him never designed him for it. A disposition to labour is as much the gift of God as an ability for it. And it is a great mercy, if where God gives strength for service, he gives a heart; and it is what we should pray for, and reason ourselves into, which the brutes cannot do; for as among beasts, so among men, those may justly be reckoned wild and abandoned to the deserts, that have no mind either to take pains, or to do good.

13. *Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?* 14. Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, 15. And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. 16. She is hardened against her young ones, as though *they were* not hers: her labour is in vain without fear; 17. Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding. 18. What time she lifteth up her self on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.

The ostrich is a wonderful animal, a very large bird, but never flies. Some have called it a winged camel. God here gives an account of it, and observes,

1. Something that it has in common with the peacock, and that is beautiful feathers, *ver. 13. Gavest thou proud wings unto the peacocks?* So some read it; fine feathers make proud birds: The peacock is an emblem of pride, when he struts and shews his fine feathers, Solomon, in all his glory, is not arrayed like him. The ostrich too has goodly feathers, and yet a foolish bird. For wisdom doth not always go along with beauty and gaiety. Other birds do not envy the peacock or the ostrich their gaudy colours, nor complain for want of them, why then should we repine, if we see others wear better clothes than we can afford to wear? God gives his gifts variously, and those gifts are not always the most valuable, that make the finest shew. Who would not rather have the voice of the nightingale, than the tail of the peacock? the eye of the eagle, and her soaring wing, and the natural affection of the stork, than the beautiful wings and feathers of the ostrich that can never rise above the earth, and is without natural affection?

2. Something that is peculiar to itself.

1. Carelessness of her young: And it is well this is peculiar to herself, for it is a very ill character. Observe, (1.) How she exposeth her eggs. She doth not retire to some private place, and make a nest there, as the sparrows and swallows do, *Psal. lxxxiv.* 3. and there lay eggs and her young. Most birds, as well as other animals, are strangely guided by natural instinct in providing for the preservation of their young: But the ostrich is a monster in nature, for she drops her eggs any where upon the ground, and takes no care to hatch them. If the sand and the sun will hatch them, well and good, they may for her, for she will not warm them, *ver. 14.* Nay, she takes no care to preserve them; the foot of the traveller may crush them, and the wild beast break them, *ver. 15.* But how then are any young ones brought forth, and whence is it that the species is not perished? We must suppose, either that God by a special providence with the heat of the sun and the sand (so some think) hatcheth the neglected eggs of the ostrich, as he feeds the neglected young ones of the raven; or that tho' the ostrich often leaves her eggs thus, yet not always. (2.) The reason why she doth thus expose her eggs: It is, (1.) For want of natural affection, *ver. 16. She is hardened against her young ones:* To be hardened against any is an ill thing even in a brute creature, much more in a rational creature that boasts of humanity; especially to be hardened against young ones, that cannot help themselves, and therefore merit compassion, that give no provocation, and therefore merit no hard usage: But it is worst of all for her to be hardened against her young ones, as tho' they were not her's, whereas really they are parts of herself: her labour in laying her eggs is in vain, and all lost, because she has not that fear and tender concern for them that she should have. Those are most likely to lose their labour that are least in fear of losing it. (2.) For want of wisdom, *ver. 17. God has deprived her of wisdom.* This intimates, that the art which other animals have to nourish and preserve their young is God's gift, and where it is not, God denies it, that by the folly of the ostrich, as well as by the wisdom of the ant, we may learn to be wise; for, (1.) As careless as the ostrich is of her eggs, many people are of their own souls, they make no provision for them, no proper nest in which they may be safe, leave them exposed to Satan and his temptations, and it is a certain evidence that they are deprived of wisdom. (2.) So careless are many parents of their children, some of their bodies, not providing for their own house, their own bowels, and therefore worse than infidels, and as bad as the ostrich; but many more are thus careless of their childrens souls, take no care of their education, send them abroad into the world untaught, unarmed, forgetting what corruption there is in the world thro' lust, which will certainly crush them: Thus their

labour in rearing them comes to be in vain; it were better for their country they had never been born. 3. So careless are too many ministers of their people, with whom they should reside, but they leave them in the earth, and forget how busy Satan is to sow tares while men sleep. They overlook those whom they should oversee, and are really hardened against them.

2. Care of herself. She leaves her eggs in danger, but if she herself be in danger, no creature shall ply the oar better to get out of the way of it than the ostrich, *ver. 18.* Then she lifts up her wings on high, (the strength of which then stands her in better stead than their beauty) and with the help of them runs so fast, that a horseman on full speed cannot overtake her; *She scorneth the horse and his rider.* Many times those that are least under the law of natural affection, contend most for the law of self-preservation. Let not the rider be proud of the swiftness of his horse, when so sottish and lubberly an animal as the ostrich shall have the heels of him.

19. *Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?* 20. Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. 21. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. 22. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. 23. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. 24. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. 25. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

God having displayed his own power in those creatures that are strong and despise man, here shews it in one scarce inferior to any of them in strength, and yet very tame and serviceable to man, and that is the horse; especially, *the horse that is prepared against the day of battle*, and is serviceable to man at a time when he has more than ordinary occasion for his service. It seems, there was in Job's country, a noble generous breed of horses. Job, it is probable, kept a good stable of them, tho' they are not mentioned among his possessions: Cattle for use in husbandry, being there valued more than those for state and war, which alone horses were then reserved for, and they were not then put to such mean services as with us they are commonly put to. Concerning the great horse, that stately beast, it is here observed,

1. That he has a great deal of strength and spirit, *ver. 19. Hast thou given the horse strength?* He uses his strength for man, but has it not from him: God gave it him, who is the fountain of all the powers of nature, and yet he himself *delighteth not in the strength of the horse*, *Psal. cxlviii.* 10. but has told us that *a horse is a vain thing for safety*, *Psal. xxxiii.* 17. For running, drawing, and carrying, no creature that is ordinarily in the service of man, hath so much strength as the horse hath, nor is of so stout and bold a spirit, not to be made afraid as a grasshopper, but daring and forward to face danger: It is a mercy to man to have such a servant, which tho' very strong, submits to the management of a child, and rebels not against his owner: but let not the strength of a horse be trusted to, *Hof. xiv.* 3. *Psal. xx.* 7. *Isa. xxxi.* 1, 3.

2. That his neck and nostrils look great: his neck is clothed with a great thundering mane, which makes him formidable, and is an ornament to him. The glory of his nostrils when he snorts, flings up his head, and throws foam about, is terrible. Perhaps, there might be at that time, and in that country, a more stately breed of horses than any we have now.

3. That he is very fierce and furious in battle, and chargeth with an undaunted courage, tho' he pusheth on in imminent danger of his life. (1.) See how frolicsome he is, *ver. 21. he paweth in the valley*, scarce knowing what ground he stands upon: he is proud of his strength, and much more reason to be so that useth his strength in the service of man, and under his direction, than the wild ass that useth it in contempt of man, and in a revolt from him, *ver. 8.* (2.) See how forward he is to engage; he goes on to meet the armed men, animated not by the goodness of the cause, or the prospect of honour, but only by the sound of the trumpet, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting of the soldiers, which are as bellows to the fire of his innate courage, and make him spring forwards with the utmost eagerness, as if he cried, *Ha, ha*, *ver. 25.* How wonderfully are the brute creatures fitted for, and inclined to the services for which they were designed. (3.) See how fearless he is, how he despiseth death and the most threatening dangers, *ver. 22. He mocketh at fear*, and makes a jest of it, flath at him with a sword, rattle the quiver, brandish the spear to drive him back; he will not retreat, but press forward, and even inspires courage into his rider. (4.) See how furious he is; he curvets and pranceth, and runs on with so much violence and heat against the enemy, that one would think he even *swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage*,

rage, ver. 24. High mettle is the praise of a horse rather than of a man, whom fierceness and rage ill become. This description of the war-horse will help to explain that character which is given of presumptuous sinners, *Jer. viii. 6. Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.* When a man's heart is fully set in him to do evil, and he is carried on in a wicked way by the violence of inordinate appetites and passions, there is no making him afraid of the wrath of God, and the fatal consequences of sin. Let his own conscience set before him the curse of the law, the death, that is the wages of sin, and all the terrors of the Almighty in battle array, and he mocks at this fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the flaming sword of the cherubim. Let ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, to proclaim the wrath of God against him, he believeth not that it is the sound of the trumpet, nor that God and his heralds are in earnest with him; but what will be in the end hereof it is easy to foresee.

26. Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? 27. Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? 28. She dwelleth and abideth on thy rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. 29. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. 30. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.

The birds of the air are proofs of the wonderful power and providence of God, as well as the beasts of the earth; God here instanteth in two stately ones.

1. The hawk, a noble bird, of great strength and sagacity, and yet a bird of prey, ver. 26. This bird is here taken notice of for her flight, which is swift and strong, and especially for the course she steers towards the south, whither she follows the sun in winter, out of the colder countries in the north, especially when she is to cast her plumes, and renew them. This is her wisdom, and it was God that gave her this wisdom, not man. Perhaps, the extraordinary wisdom of the hawk's flight after her prey was not used then for mens diversion and recreation, as it has been since. It is pity the reclaimed hawk, that is taught to fly at man's command, and to make him sport, should at any time be abused to the dishonour of God, since it is from God, that she receive that wisdom which makes her flight entertaining and serviceable.

The eagle, a royal bird, and yet a bird of prey too, the permission of which, nay, the giving of power to which, may help to reconcile us to the prosperity of oppressors among men. The eagle is here taken notice of, (1.) For the height of her flight; no bird soars so high, has so strong a wing, nor can so well bear the light of the sun; *now doth she mount at thy command?* ver. 27. Is it by any strength she has from thee, or dost thou direct her flight? No, it is by the natural power and instinct God has given her, she will soar out of thy sight, much more out of thy call. (2.) For the strength of her nest, her house is her castle and stronghold; she makes it on high and on the rock, the crag of the rock, ver. 28. which sets her and her young out of the reach of danger. Secure sinners think themselves as safe in their sins as the eagle in her nest on high, in the clefts of the rock, *Jer. xlv. 16. But I will bring thee down from thence* saith the Lord. The higher ill men sit above the resentments of the earth, the nearer they ought to think themselves to the vengeance of heaven. (3.) For her quicksightedness, ver. 29. *Her eyes behold afar off*, not upwards, but downwards, in quest of her prey. In this she is an emblem of an hypocrite, who while in the profession of religion he seems to rise towards heaven, at the same time his eye and heart are upon the prey on earth, some temporal advantage, some widow's house or other that he hopes to devour under pretence of devotion. (4.) For the way she has of maintaining herself and her young; she preys upon living animals, which she seizeth and tears to pieces, and then carries to her young ones, who are taught to suck up blood; they do it by instinct, and know no better; but for men that have reason and conscience, to thirst after blood, is what could scarce be believed, if there had not been in every age wretched instances of it. She also preys upon the dead bodies of men; *where the slain are, there is she.* These birds of prey (in another sense than the horse, ver. 25.) *smell the battle afar off*; therefore when a great slaughter is to be made among the enemies of the church, the fowls are invited to the supper of the great God, to eat the flesh of kings and captains, *Rev. xix. 17, 18.* Our Saviour refers to this instinct of the eagle, *Matt. xxiv. 28. Wherever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* Every creature will make towards that which is its proper food; for he that provides them their food, has implanted in them that inclination. These and many such instances of natural power and sagacity in the inferior creatures, which we cannot account for, oblige us to confess our own weakness and ignorance, and to give glory to God as the fountain of all being, power, wisdom, and perfection.

CHAP. XL.

Many humbling puzzling questions God had put to Job in the foregoing chapter; now in this chapter, (1.) He demands an answer to them, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Job submits in a humble silence, ver. 3—5. (3.) God proceeds to reason with him, for his conviction of the infinite distance and disproportion between him and God, and that he was by no means an equal match for him. He challengeth him, ver. 6, 7. to vie with him, if he durst, for justice, ver. 8. power, ver. 9. majesty, ver. 10. and dominion over the proud, ver. 11—14. and gives an instance of his power in one particular animal, here called Behemoth, ver. 15—24.

1. **M**OREOVER, the Lord answered Job, and said, 2. Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. 3. ¶ Then Job answered the Lord, and said, 4. Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. 5. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.

Here is, 1. A humbling challenge which God gave to Job. After he had heaped up many hard questions upon him, by his manifest ignorance in the works of nature, to shew him what an incompetent judge he was of the methods and designs of providence, he clenches the nail with one demand more, which stands by itself here at the application of the whole. It should seem God paused a while, as Elihu had done, to give Job time to say what he had to say, or to think of what God had said; but Job was in such confusion, that he remained silent, and therefore God here put him upon replying, ver. 1, 2. This is not said to be spoken out of the whirlwind, as before, and therefore some think God said it in a still small voice, which wrought more upon Job than the whirlwind did, as upon Elijah, 1 *Kin. xix. 12, 13. My doctrine shall drop as the rain*, and then it doth wonders. Tho' Job had not spoken any thing, yet God is said to answer him; for he knows mens thoughts, and can return a suitable answer to their silence. Here,

(1.) God puts a convincing question to him: *Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?* Shall he pretend to dictate to God's wisdom, or prescribe to his will? Shall God receive instruction from every peevish complainer, and change the measures he has taken to please him? It is a question with disdain: *Shall any teach God knowledge?* Job xxi. 22. It is intimated that those who quarrel with God, do, in effect, go about to teach him how to mend his work. For if we contend with men like ourselves, as not having done well, we ought to instruct them how to do better; but is it a thing to be suffered that any man should teach his Maker? He that contends with God is justly looked upon as his enemy, and shall he pretend so far to have prevailed in the contest, as to prescribe to him? We are ignorant and short-sighted, but before him all things are naked and open; we are foolish, but his wisdom is infinite; we are depending creatures, but he is the sovereign Creator, and shall we pretend to instruct him? Some read it, *Is it any wisdom to contend with the Almighty?* The answer is easy, no, it is the greatest folly in the world. Is it wisdom to contend with him whom it will certainly be our ruin to oppose, and unspeakably our interest to submit to?

(2.) He demands a speedy reply to it: *He that reproacheth God let him answer* this question to his own conscience, and answer it thus, *Far be it from me to contend with the Almighty*, or to instruct him. Let him answer all those questions which I have put if he can: Let him answer for his presumption and insolence, answer it at God's bar to his confusion; Those have high thoughts of themselves, and mean thoughts of God, who reprove any thing he saith or doth.

2. Job's humble submission thereupon. Now Job came to himself, and began to melt into godly sorrow; when his friends reasoned with him, he did not yield, but the voice of the Lord is powerful. *When the spirit of truth is come he shall convince.* They had condemned him for a wicked man, Elihu himself had been very sharp upon him, chap. xxxiv. 7, 8, 37. but God had not given him such hard words. We may sometimes have reason to expect better treatment from God, and a more candid construction of what we do, than we meet with from our friends. And this the good man is here overcome by, and yields himself a conquered captive to the grace of God. (1.) He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say in his own justification, ver. 4. *Behold I am vile*, not only mean and contemptible, but vile and abominable in my own eyes. He is now sensible that

he hath sinned, and therefore calls himself vile: Sin debaseth us, and penitents abase themselves, reproach themselves, are ashamed, yea, even confounded. I have acted undutifully to my father, ungratefully to my benefactor, unwisely for my self, and therefore I am vile. Job now vilifies himself as much as ever he had justified and magnified himself: repentance changes mens opinion of themselves. Job had been too bold in demanding a conference with God, and thought he could make his part good with him; but now he is convinced of his error, and owns himself utterly unable to stand before God, or to produce any thing worth his notice, the veryest dunghill worm that ever crawled upon God's ground. While his friends talked with him, he answered them, for he thought himself as good as they; but when God talked with him, he had nothing to say; for in comparison with him he sees himself nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and vileness it felt, and therefore *what shall I answer thee?* God demanded an answer, *ver. 2.* Here he gives the reason of his silence; it was not because he was fullen, but because he was convinced he had been in the wrong. Those that are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness, dare not justify themselves before God, but are ashamed that ever they entertained such a thought, and in token of their shame, lay their hand upon their mouth.

(2.) He promiseth not to offend any more as he had done; for Elihu had told him this was meet to be said unto God. When we have spoken amiss, we must repent of it, and not repeat it, nor stand to it. He enjoins himself silence, *ver. 4.* *I will lay my hand upon my mouth*, will keep that as with a bridle, to suppress all passionate thoughts which may arise in my mind, and keep them from breaking out in intemperate speeches. It is bad to think amiss, but it is much worse to speak amiss, for that is an allowance of the evil thought, and gives it an *imprimatur*; it is publishing the seditious libel; and therefore *if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth*, and let it go no farther, *Prov. xxx. 32.* and that will be an evidence for thee, that that which thou thoughtest thou allowest not. Job had suffered his evil thoughts to vent themselves, *once have I spoken amiss, yea twice, i. e.* divers times, in one discourse and in another; but I have done, I will not answer, I will not stand to what I have said, nor say it again, I will proceed no further. Observe here what true repentance is. (1.) It is to rectify our errors, and the false principles we went upon in doing as we did. What we have long, and oft, and vigorously maintained once, yea twice, as soon as we are convinced that it is a mistake, we must retract it, not adhere to it any longer, but take shame to our selves for holding it so long. (2.) It is to return from every by-path, and to proceed not one step further in it. I will not add, so the word is, I will never indulge my passion so much again, nor give my self such a liberty of speech, will never say as I have said, nor do as I have done. Till it come to this, we come short of repentance. Further observe, That those who dispute with God, will be silenced at last. Job had been very bold and forward in demanding a conference with God, and talked very big, how plain he would make his case, and how sure he was that he should be justified, *as a prince he would go near unto him*, chap. xxxi. 37. he would *come even to his seat*, chap. xxiii. 3. but he has soon enough of it, he let's fall his plea, and will not answer; Lord, the wisdom and right is all on thy side, and I have done foolishly and wickedly in questioning it.

6. ¶ Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 7. Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 8. Wilt thou also disanul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous? 9. Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? 10. Deck thy self now with majesty and excellency, and array thy self with glory and beauty. 11. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. 12. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low: and tread down the wicked in their place. 13. Hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret. 14. Then will I also confess unto thee, that thine own right hand can save thee.

Job was greatly humbled for what God had already said, but not sufficiently; brought low, but not low enough, and therefore God here proceeds to reason with him, in the same manner, and to the same purpose as before, *ver. 6.* Observe (1.) Those who duly receive what they have heard from God, and profit by it, shall hear more from him. (2.) Those that are truly convinced of sin, and penitent for it, yet have need to be more thoroughly convinced, and to be made more deeply penitent. Those that are under convictions, that have their sins set in order before their eyes, and their hearts broken for them, must learn from this instance not to catch at comfort too soon; it will be everlasting when it comes, and therefore it is necessary we be prepared for it by deep humiliation, that the wound be searched to the bottom,

and not skinned over, and that we do not make more haste out of our convictions than good speed. When our hearts begin to melt, and relent within us, let those considerations be dwelt upon and pursued, which will help to make a thorough effectual thaw of it.

God begins with a challenge, *ver. 7.* as before, chap. xxxviii. 3. *Gird up thy loins now like a man*; if thou hast the courage and confidence thou hast pretended to, shew it now; but thou wilt soon be made to see and own thy self no match for me. This is that which every proud heart must be brought to at last, either by its repentance or by its ruin; and thus low must every mountain and hill be sooner or later brought. We must acknowledge,

1. That we cannot vie with God for justice; that the Lord is righteous and holy in his dealings with us, but we are unrighteous and unholy in our carriage towards him; we have a great deal to blame ourselves for, but nothing to blame him for, *ver. 8.* *Wilt thou disanul my judgment?* Wilt thou take exceptions to what I say and do, and bring a writ of error to reverse the judgment I have given, as erroneous and unjust? Many of Job's complaints had too much of a tendency this way; *I cry out of wrong*, saith he, *but I am not heard*; but such language as this is by no means to be suffered. God's judgment cannot, must not, be disannulled, for we are sure it is according to truth, and therefore it is a great piece of impudence and iniquity in us to call it in question? What, saith God, *wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous?* Must my honour suffer for the support of thy reputation? Must I be charged as dealing unjustly with thee, because thou canst not otherwise clear thy self from the censures thou liest under? Our duty is to condemn ourselves that God may be righteous, David is therefore ready to own the evil he has done in God's sight, that *God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth*, *Psal. li. 4.* See *Neb. ix. 33.* *Dan. ix. 7.* But those are very proud, and very ignorant both of God and themselves, who to clear themselves will condemn God; and the day is coming, when, if the mistake be not rectified in time by repentance, the eternal judgment will be both the confutation of the plea, and the confusion of the prisoner, for the heavens shall declare God's righteousness, and all the world shall become guilty before him.

2. That we cannot vie with God for power; and therefore as it is great impiety, so it is great imprudence to contest with him, and we go as much against our interest, as we do against reason and right, *ver. 9.* *Hast thou an arm like God?* equal to his in length and strength, or *canst thou thunder with a voice like him*, as he did, chap. xxxvii. 1, 2. or doth now out of the whirlwind? To convince Job that he was not so able as he thought himself to contest with God, he shews him (1.) That he could never fight it out with him, nor carry his cause by force of arms. Sometimes among men, controversies have been decided by battle, and the victorious champion is adjudged to have the right on his side; but if it be put upon that issue between God and man, man would certainly go by the worse, for all the force he could raise against the Almighty, would be but like briars and thorns before a consuming fire, *Isa. xxvii. 4.* Hast thou, a poor weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to his, who upholdeth all things? The power of creatures, even of angels themselves, is derived from God, limited by him, and dependent on him; but the power of God is original, independent, and unlimited: He can do every thing without us, we can do nothing without him, and therefore we have not an arm like God. (2.) That he could never talk it out with him, nor carry his cause by noise and big words, which sometimes among men go a great way towards the gaining of a point: *Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?* No, his voice will soon drown thine, and one of his thunders will over-power, and over-rule all thy whispers. Man cannot speak so convincingly, so powerfully, nor with such a commanding conquering force as God can, who speaks and it is done: His creating voice is called his thunder, *Psal. civ. 7.* so is that voice of his, with which he terrifies and discomfits his enemies, *1 Sam. ii. 10.* *Out of heaven shall be thunder upon them.* The wrath of a king may sometimes be like the roaring of a lion, but can never pretend to imitate God's thunder.

3. That we cannot vie with God for beauty and majesty, *ver. 10.* If thou wilt enter into a comparison with him, and appear more amiable, put on thy best cloaths, *Deck thy self now with majesty and excellency.* Appear in all the martial pomp, in all the royal pomp thou hast, make the best of every thing that will set thee off, array thy self with glory and beauty, such as may awe thy enemies, and charm thy friends; but what is it all to the divine majesty and beauty? no more than the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength. God decks himself with such majesty and glory, as is the terror of devils, and all the powers of darkness, and makes them tremble; he arrays himself with such glory and beauty as is the wonder of angels, and all the saints in light, and makes them rejoice. David could dwell all his days in God's house, to behold the beauty of the Lord. But in comparison with this, what is all that majesty and excellency with which princes think themselves scared, and all that glory and beauty with which lovers think to make themselves beloved? If Job think, in contending with God, to carry the day by looking great and making a figure, he is quite mistaken, The

The sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded, when God shines forth.

4. That we cannot vie with God, for dominion over the proud, *ver. 11, 12, 13, 14.* Here the cause is put upon this short issue; if Job can humble and abase proud tyrants and oppressors as easily and effectually as God can, it shall be acknowledged that he has some colour to compare with God. Observe here,

1. The justice Job is here challenged to do, and that is to bring the proud low, with a look; if Job will pretend to be a rival with God, especially if he pretend to be a judge of his actions, he must be able to do this.

(1.) It is here supposed that God can do it, and will do it himself, else he would not have put it thus upon Job. By this God proves himself to be God, that he resisted the proud, sat judge upon them, and is able to bring them to ruin. Observe here (1.) That proud people are wicked people, and pride is at the bottom of a great deal of wickedness that is in this world; both towards God and man. (2.) Proud people will certainly be abased and brought low, for pride goes before destruction. If they bend not, they will break; if they humble not themselves by true repentance, God will humble them to their everlasting confusion. *The wicked will be trodden down in their place, i. e.* Wherever they are found, tho' they pretend to have a place of their own, and to have taken root in it, yet even there they shall be trodden down, and all the wealth, and power, and interest which their place intitles them to, will not be their security. (3.) The wrath of God scattered among the proud, will humble them and break them, and bring them down. If he casts abroad the rage of his wrath, as he will do at the great day, and sometimes doth in this life, the stoutest heart cannot hold out against him; who knows the power of his anger? (4.) God can and doth easily abase proud tyrants; he can look upon them and bring them low, can put them to shame and fear, and utter ruin with one angry look, as he can with a gracious look revive the hearts of the contrite ones. (5.) He can and will at last do it effectually, *ver. 13.* not only bring them to the dust, from which they might hope to arise, but hide them in the dust, like the proud Egyptian whom Moses slew, and hid in the sand, *Exod. ii. 12. i. e.* They shall not only be brought to death, but brought to the grave, that pit out of which there is no return. They were proud of the figure they made, but they shall be buried in oblivion, and be no more remembered than those that are hid in the dust, out of sight and out of mind. They were linked in leagues and confederacies to do mischief, and are now bound in bundles, they are hid together, not their rest, but their *shame together is in the dust*, chap. xvii. 16. Nay, they are treated as malefactors, who, when condemned, had their faces covered, as Haman's was, he binds their faces in secret; or as dead men. Lazarus in the grave had his face bound about. So compleat will the victory be, that God will gain at last over proud sinners, that set themselves in opposition to him. Now by this he proves himself to be God. Doth he thus hate proud men? then he is holy: Will he thus punish them? then he is the just Judge of the world: Can he thus humble them? then he is the Lord Almighty. When he had abased proud Pharaoh, and hid him in the sand of the Red-sea; Jethro from thence inferred, that doubtless *the Lord is greater than all gods, for wherein the proud enemies of his Israel dealt proudly, he was above them*, he was too hard for them, *Exod. xviii. 11.* See *Rev. xix. 1, 2.*

(2.) It is here proposed to Job to do it. He had been passionately quarrelling with God and his providence, casting abroad the rage of his wrath towards heaven, as if he thought thereby to bring God himself to his mind; Come, faith God, try thy hand first upon proud men, and thou wilt soon see how little they value the rage of thy wrath, and shall I then regard it, or be moved by it? Job had complained of the prosperity and power of tyrants and oppressors, and was ready to charge God with male-administration for suffering it; but he ought not to find fault, except he could mend. If God, and he only, has power enough to humble and bring down proud men, no doubt he has wisdom enough to know when and how to do it, and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or to teach him how to govern the world, unless we had an arm like God, we must not think to take his work out of his hands.

2. The justice which is here promised shall be done him, if he can perform such mighty works as these, *ver. 14.* *Then will I also confess unto thee, that thy right hand is sufficient to save thee*, tho' after all it would be too weak to contend with me. It is the innate pride and ambition of man, that he would be his own saviour, would have his own hands sufficient for him, and be independent; but it is presumption to pretend to it; our own hands cannot save us by recommending us to God's grace, much less by rescuing us from his justice, unless we could by our own power humble our enemies, we cannot pretend by our own power to save our selves; but if we could, God himself would confess it. He never did, nor ever will, defraud any man of his just praise, nor deny him the honour he has merited. But since we cannot do this, we must confess unto him, that our own hands cannot save us, and therefore into his hand we must commit our selves.

15. ¶ Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee, he eateth grass as an ox. 16. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. 17. He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapt together. 18. His bones are as strong pices of brass, his bones are like bars of iron. 19. He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him, can make his sword to approach unto him. 20. Surely the mountains bring him forth food: where all the beasts of the field play. 21. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. 22. The shady trees cover him with their shadow: the willows of the brook compass him about. 23. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. 24. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.

God, for the further proving of his own power, and disproving of Job's pretensions, concludes his discourse with the description of two huge vast mighty animals, far exceeding man in bulk and strength, one he calls behemoth, the other leviathan. In these verses we have the former described. *Behold now behemoth*, and consider whether thou art able to contend with him who made that beast, and gave him all that power that he hath, and whether it is not thy wisdom rather to submit to him, and make thy peace with him.

Behemoth signifies beasts in general, but must here be meant of some one particular species. Some understand it of the bull; others of an amphibious animal, well known (they say) in Egypt, called the river-horse, (*Hippopotamus*) living among the fish in the river Nile, but coming out to feed upon the earth. But I confess I see no reason to depart from the antient, and most generally received opinion, that it is the elephant that is here described, which is a very strong stately creature, of very large stature above any other, and of wonderful sagacity, and of so great a reputation in the animal kingdom, that among so many four-footed beasts, as we have had the natural history of, *chap. xxxviii and xxxix.* we can scarce suppose this should be omitted.

Observe,

1. The description here given of the behemoth. (1.) His body is very strong and well-built. *His strength is in his loins*, *ver. 16.* His bones, compared with those of other creatures, are like bars of iron, *ver. 18.* His back-bone so strong, that tho' his tail be not large, yet he moves it like a cedar, with a commanding force, *ver. 17.* Some understand it of the trunk of the elephant, for the word signifies any extreme part, and in that there is indeed a wonderful strength; so strong is the elephant in his back and loins, and the sinews of his thighs, that he will carry a large wooden tower, and a great number of fighting men in it. No animal whatsoever comes near the Elephant for strength of body, which is the main thing insisted on in this description.

(2.) He feeds on the products of the earth, and doth not prey upon other animals, he *eateth grass as an ox*, *ver. 15.* the *mountains bring forth food*, *ver. 20.* and the beasts of the field do not tremble before him, nor flee from him, as from a lion, but they play about him, knowing they are in no danger from him. This may give us occasion, (1.) To acknowledge the goodness of God in ordering it so, that a creature of such bulk, that requires so much food, should not feed upon flesh, for then multitudes must die to keep him alive, but should be content with the grass of the field, to prevent such destruction of lives as otherwise must have been made. (2.) To commend living upon herbs and fruits without flesh, according to the original appointment of man's food, *Gen. i. 29.* Even the strength of an elephant, as of a horse, and an ox, may be supported without flesh, and why not those of a man? Tho' therefore we use the liberty God has allowed us, yet *be not among riotous eaters of flesh*, *Prov. xxiii. 20.* (3.) To command a quiet and peaceable life. Who would not rather, like the elephant, have his neighbours easy and pleasant about him, than, like the lion, have them all afraid of him?

(3.) He lodgeth under the shady trees, *ver. 21.* which cover him with their shadow, *ver. 22.* where he has a free and open air to breathe in, while the lions that live by prey, when they would repose themselves, are obliged to retire into a close and dark den, to live therein, and to abide in the covert of that, *chap. xxxviii. 40.* They that are a terror to others, cannot but be sometimes a terror to themselves too; but they will be easy that will let others be easy about them, and the reed and fens, and the willows of the brook, tho' a very weak and slender fortification, yet are sufficient for the defence and security of those who therefore dread no harm, because they design none.

(4.) That he is a very great and greedy drinker, not of wine and strong drink, to be greedy of that is peculiar to man, who by his drunkenness makes a beast of himself, but of fair water. (1.) His belly is big, and must be filled, and therefore he must have supply accordingly, *ver. 23.* He drinks so much, that one would think he could drink up a river, if you would give him time, and not hasten him. Or when he drinks, he hasteth not, as those do that drink in fear; he is confident of his own strength and safety, and

and therefore makes no haste when he drinks, no more haste than good speed. (2.) His eye is bigger than his belly; for when he is very thirsty, having been long kept without water, he *trusteth that he can drink up Jordan in his mouth*, and even takes it with his eyes, ver. 24. As a covetous man causeth his eyes to fly upon the wealth of this world, which he is greedy of, so this great beast is said to snatch, or draw up, even a river with his eyes. (3.) His nose has in it strength enough for both, for when he goes greedily to drink with it, he pierceth through snares, or nets, which perhaps are laid in the water to catch fish. He makes nothing of the difficulties that lie in his way, so great is his strength, and so eager his appetite.

2. The use that is to be made of this description, we have taken a view of this mountain of a beast, this over-grown animal, which is here set before us not merely as a show, (as sometimes it is in our country) to satisfy our curiosity, and to amuse us, but as an argument with us to humble our selves before the great God; for,

1. He made this vast animal, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made, it is the work of his hands, the contrivance of his wisdom, the product of his power, it is *behemoth which I made*, ver. 15. Whatever strength this or any other creature hath, it is derived from God, who therefore must be acknowledged to have all power originally and infinitely in himself, and such an arm as it is not for us to contest with. This beast is here called the chief in its kind *of the ways of God*, ver. 19. An eminent instance of the Creator's power and wisdom. They that will peruse the accounts given by historians of the elephant, will find that his capacities approach nearer to those of reason, than the capacities of any other brute creature whatsoever, and therefore he is fitly called *the chief of the ways of God*, in the inferior part of the creation, no creature below man being preferable to him.

2. He made him with man, as he made other four-footed beasts, on the same day with man, *Gen. i. 25, 26.* whereas the fish and fowl were made the day before; and to live and move on the same earth, in the same element, and therefore man and beast are said to be jointly preserved by the divine providence, as fellow commoners, *Psal. xxxvi. 6.* it is behemoth which I made with thee; I made that beast as well as thee, and he doth not quarrel with me, why then dost thou? Why shouldst thou demand peculiar favours, because I made thee, *chap. x. 9.* when I made the behemoth likewise with thee? I made thee as well as that beast, and therefore can as easily manage thee at pleasure as that beast, and will do it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou chuse. I made him with thee, that thou mayst look upon him and receive instruction: We need not go far for proofs and instances of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion, they are with us, they are near us, they are under our eye wherever we are.

3. *He that made him, can make his sword to approach to him*, ver. 19. *i. e.* The same hand that made him, notwithstanding his great bulk and strength, can unmake him again at pleasure, and kill an elephant as easily as a worm or a fly, without any difficulty, and without impeachment either of waste or wrong. God that gave to all the creatures their being, may take away the being he gave, for may he not do what he will with his own? And he can do it, he that has power to create with a word, no doubt has power to destroy with a word, and can as easily speak the creature into nothing, as at first he spoke it out of nothing. The behemoth perhaps is here intended (as well as the leviathan afterwards) to represent those proud tyrants and oppressors, whom God had just now challenged Job to abase and bring down: They think themselves as well fortified against the judgments of God, as the elephant with his bones of brass and iron; but he that made the soul of man, knows all the avenues to it, and can make the sword of justice, his wrath, to approach to it, and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. He that framed the engine, and put the parts of it together, knows how to take it in pieces. Wo to him therefore that strives with his Maker, for he that made, has therefore power to make him miserable, and will not make him happy, unless he will be ruled by him.

CHAP. XLI.

The description here given of the leviathan, a very large strong formidable fish, or water-animal, is designed yet further to convince Job of his own impotency, and of God's omnipotence, that he might be humbled for his folly in making so bold with him as he had done.

(1.) To convince Job of his own weakness, he is here challenged to subdue and tame this leviathan if he could, and make himself master of him, ver. 1—9. which because he cannot do, he must own himself utterly unable to stand before the great God, ver. 10.

(2.) To convince Job of God's power and terrible majesty, divers particular instances are here given of the strength and terror of the leviathan, which is no more than what God has given him, nor more than he has under his check, ver. 11, 12. The face of the leviathan is here described to be terrible, ver. 13, 14. His scales close, ver. 15, 17. His breath and neefings sparkling, ver. 18—21. His flesh firm, ver. 22, 24. His strength and spirit when he is attacked insuperable, ver. 25—30. His motions turbulent and disturbing to the waters, ver. 31, 32. So that upon the whole matter he is a very terrible creature, and man is no match for him, ver. 33, 34.

CANST thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord *which* thou lettest down? 2. Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? 3. Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? 4. Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? 5. Wilt thou play with him, as *with* a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? 6. Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants? 7. Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish-spears? 8. Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. 9. Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not *one* be cast down, even at the sight of him? 10. None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me?

Whether this leviathan be a whale or a crocodile, is a great dispute among the learned, which I will not undertake to determine; some of the particulars agree more easily to the one; others to the other; both are very strong and fierce, and the power of the Creator appears in them. The ingenious Sir Richard Blackmore, tho' he admits the more received opinion concerning the behemoth, that that must be meant of the elephant, yet agrees with the learned Bochart's notion of the leviathan, that it is the crocodile which was so well known in the river of Egypt. I confess that which inclines me rather to understand it of the whale, is not only because it is much larger, and a nobler animal, but because in the history of the creation there is such an express notice taken of it, as is not of any other species of animals whatsoever, *Gen. i. 21. God created great whales*; by which it appears not only that whales were well known in those parts in Moses's time, who lived a little after Job; but that the creation of whales was generally looked upon as a most illustrious proof of the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator; and we may conjecture that this was the reason (for otherwise it seems unaccountable) why Moses there so particularly mentions the creation of the whales, because God has so lately in this discourse with Job, more largely insisted upon the bulk and strength of that creature than of any other, as the proof of his power; and the leviathan is here spoken of as an inhabitant of the sea, ver. 31. which the crocodile is not; and *Psal. civ. 25, 26. there, in the great and wide sea, is that leviathan.*

Here in these verses,

1. He shews how unable Job was to master the leviathan. (1.) That he could not catch him as a little fish with angling, ver. 1. 2. He had no bait wherewith to deceive him, no hook wherewith to catch him, no fish-line wherewith to draw him out of the water, nor a thorn to run through his gills, on which to carry him home. (2.) That he could not make him his prisoner, nor force him to cry quarter, or surrender himself at discretion, ver. 3, 4. He knows his own strength too well to make many supplications to thee, and to make a covenant with thee to be thy servant, on condition thou wilt save his life. (3.) That he could not entice him into a cage, and keep him there as a bird for the children to play with, ver. 5. There are creatures so little, so weak, as to be easily restrained thus, and triumphed over, but the leviathan is none of those, he is made to be the terror, not the sport and diversion, of mankind. (4.) That he could not have him served up to his table at a fish-dinner; he and his companions could not make a banquet of him; his flesh is too strong to be fit for food, nor if he were good fish, is he so easily caught. (5.) That they could not enrich themselves with the spoil of him, *shall they part him among the merchants*, the bones to one, the oil to another? so they will do if they can catch him; but it is probable the art of fishing for whales was not brought to perfection then, as it has been since. (6.) That they could not be the death of him, could not fill his head with fish-spears, ver. 7. He kept out of the reach of their instruments of slaughter, or if they touched him, they could not touch him to the quick. (7.) That it was to no purpose to attempt it, *the hope of taking him is in vain*, ver. 9. If men go about to seize him, so formidable is he, that the very sight of him will give them enough, and make a stout man ready to faint away; *shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?* and will not that deter the pursuers from their attempt? Job is bid at his peril to lay his hand upon him, ver. 8. touch him if thou dare, remember the battle, how unable thou art to encounter such a force, and what is therefore likely to be the issue of the battle, and do no more, but desist from the attempt. It is good to remember the battle before we engage in a war, and put off the harness in time, if we foresee it will be to no purpose to gird it on. Job is hereby admonished not to proceed in his controversy with God, but to make his peace with him, remembering what the battle will certainly end in, if we come to an engagement. See *Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.*

2. From thence he infers how unable he was to contend with the Almighty: *None is so fierce*, none so fool-hardy *that dare stir up the leviathan*, ver. 10. as knowing he will certainly be too hard for them; and *who then is able to stand before God?* either

to impeach and arraign his proceeding, or to out-face the power of his wrath. If the inferior creatures that are put under the feet of man, and over whom he has dominion, keep us in awe thus, how terrible must the majesty of our great Lord be, who has a sovereign dominion over us, and against whom man has been so long in rebellion? *Who can stand before him when once he is angry?*

11. Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? *whatsoever* is under the whole heaven is mine. 12. I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. 13. Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? 14. Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about. 15. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. 16. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. 17. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundred. 18. By his neefings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eye-lids of the morning. 19. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. 20. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. 21. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. 22. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. 23. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves, they cannot be moved. 24. His heart is as firm as a stone, yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. 25. When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves. 26. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. 27. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. 28. The arrow cannot make him flee: sling-stones are turned with him into stubble. 29. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. 30. Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire. 31. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. 32. He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary. 33. Upon earth there is not his like: who is made without fear. 34. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.

God having in the foregoing verses shewed Job how unable he was to deal with the leviathan, here sets forth his own power in that massy mighty creature. Here is,

1. God's sovereign dominion and independency laid down, *ver. 11.* (1.) That he is indebted to none of his creatures: If any pretend he is indebted to them, let them make their demand and prove their debt, and they shall receive it in full, and not by composition. *Who has prevented me? i. e. who has laid any obligations upon me by any service they have done me? Who can pretend to be before-hand with me? If any were, I would not long be behind hand with them, I would soon repay them.* The apostle quotes this for the silencing of all flesh in God's presence, *Rom. xi. 35. Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?* As God doth not inflict upon us the evils we have deserved, so he doth bestow upon us the favours we have not deserved. (2.) That he is the rightful lord and owner of all the creatures: whatsoever is under the whole heavens, animate or inanimate, is mine, (and particularly this leviathan) at my command and dispose; what I have an incontestible property in, and dominion over. All is his, we are his, all we have and do, and therefore we cannot make God our debtor; but of thine own, Lord, have we given thee. All is his, and therefore if he were indebted to any, he has wherewithal to repay them; the debt is in good hands. All is his, and therefore he needs not our services, nor can he be benefited by them. *If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof,* Psal. l. 12.

2. The proof and illustration of it, from the wonderful structure of the leviathan, *ver. 12.* The parts of his body, the power he exerts, especially when he is set upon, and the comely proportion of the whole of him, is what God will not conceal, and therefore what we must observe and acknowledge the power of God in. Tho' he be a creature of monstrous bulk, yet there is in him a comely proportion; In our eye, beauty lies in little, (*Inest sua gratia parvis*) because we our selves are little; but in God's eye even the leviathan is comely; and if he pronounce even the whale, even the crocodile so, it is not for us to say of any of the works of his hands they are ugly, or ill-favoured; it is enough to say so, as we have cause, of our own works. God here goes about to give us an anatomy (as it were) of the leviathan, for his works appear most beautiful and excellent, and his wisdom and

power appear most in them, when they are taken in pieces and viewed in their several parts and proportions.

1. The leviathan, even *prima facie*, appears formidable and inaccessible, *ver. 13, 14.* Who dares come so near him while he is alive, as to discover, or take a distinct view of the face of the garment, the skin with which he is clothed as with a garment? so near him as to bridle him like a horse, and so lead him away? so near him as to be within reach of his jaws, which are like a double bridle? Who will venture to look into his mouth, (as we do into a horse's mouth) he that opens the doors of his face will see his teeth terrible round about, strong and sharp, and fitted to devour; it would make a man tremble to think of having a leg or an arm between them.

2. His scales are his beauty and strength, and therefore his pride, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* The crocodile is indeed remarkable for his scales; if we understand it of the whale, we must understand by these shields (for so the word is) the several coats of his skin; or there might be whales in that country with scales. That which is remarkable concerning the scales, is that they stick so close together, by which he is not only kept warm, for no air can pierce him, but kept safe, for no sword can pierce him through those scales. Fishes that live in the water are fortified accordingly by the wisdom of providence; which gives clothes as it gives cold.

3. He scatters terror with his very breath and looks; if he sneeze, or spout by water, it is like a light shining, either with the froth, or the light of the sun shining through it, *ver. 18.* The eyes of the whale are reported in the night-time to shine like a flame, or, as here, like the eye-lids of the morning; the same they say of the crocodile. The breath of this creature is so hot and fiery, from the great natural heat within, that burning lamps and sparks of fire, smoke and a flame, are said to go out of his mouth, even such as one would think sufficient to set coals on fire, *ver. 19, 20, 21.* Probably these hyperbolical expressions are used concerning the leviathan, to intimate the power and terror of the wrath of God, for that is it which all this is designed to convince us of; *fire out of his mouth devours,* Psal. xviii. 7, 8. The breath of the Almighty, like a stream of brimstone kindles Tophet, and will for ever keep it burning, *Isa. xxx. 33.* The wicked one shall be consumed with the breath of his mouth, *2 Thes. ii. 8.*

4. He is of invincible strength, and most terrible fierceness, so that he frightens all that come in his way, but is not himself frightened by any. Take a view of his neck, and there remains strength, *ver. 22.* His head and his body are well set together; sorrow rejoiceth, or rides in triumph before him, for he makes terrible work where-ever he comes. Or those storms which are the sorrow of others are his joy; what is tossing to others is dancing to him. His flesh is well knit, *ver. 23.* The flakes of it are joined so close together, and are so firm, that it is hard to pierce it; he is as if he were all bone; *his flesh is of brass*, which Job had complained his was not, *chap. vi. 12.* His heart is as firm as a stone, *ver. 24.* He has spirit equal to his bodily strength, and tho' he is bulky he is sprightly and not unwieldy; as his flesh and skin cannot be pierced, so his courage cannot be daunted; but on the contrary he daunts all he meets, and puts them into a consternation, *ver. 25.* When he raiseth up himself like a moving mountain in the great waters, even the mighty are afraid lest he overturn their ships, or do them some other mischief: by reason of the breakings he makes in the water, which threaten death, they purify themselves, confess their sins, betake themselves to their prayers, and get ready for death. We read, *chap. iii. 8.* of those who when they raise up a leviathan are in such a fright that they curse the day. It was a fear which it seems used to drive some to their curses, and others to their prayers, for as now, so then there were sea-faring men of different characters, and on whom the terrors of the sea have contrary effects; but all agree there is a great fright among them when the leviathan raiseth up himself.

5. All the instruments of slaughter that are used against him, do him no hurt, and therefore are no terror to him, *ver. 26, 27, 28, 29.* The sword and the spear which wound nigh at hand are nothing to him, the darts, arrows, and sling-stones, which wound at a distance, do him no damage, nature has so well armed him cap-a-pee against them all. The defensive weapons which men use when they engage with the leviathan, as the habergeon, or breast-plate, often stead men no more than their offensive weapons; iron and brass are to him as straw and rotten wood, and he laughs at them. It is the picture of a hard-hearted finner that despiseth the terrors of the Almighty, and laughs at all the threatenings of his word. The leviathan so little dreads the weapons that are used against him, that to shew how hardy he is, he chuseth to lie on the sharp stones, the sharp pointed things, *ver. 30.* and lies as easy there, as if he lay on the soft mire. Those that would endure hardness must enure themselves to it.

6. His very motion in the water troubles it, and puts it into a ferment, *ver. 31, 32.* When he rolls and tosseth, and makes a baffle in the water, or is in pursuit of his prey he makes the deep to boil like a pot, he raiseth a great froth and foam upon the water, such as is upon a boiling-pot, especially a pot of boiling ointment; and he makes a path to shine after him, which even a ship in the midst

midst of the sea doth not, *Prov. xxx. 19.* One may trace the leviathan under water by the bubbles on the surface, and yet who can take that advantage against him in pursuing him? Men track hares in the snow, and kill them, but he that tracks the leviathan dares not come near him.

Lastly, Having given this particular account of *his parts, and his power, and his comely proportion*, he concludes with four things in general concerning this animal, *ver. 33, 34.* (1.) That he is a non-such among the inferior creatures; *upon earth there is not his like*, no creature in this world is comparable to him for strength and terror; or, the earth is here distinguished from the sea: *His dominion is not upon the earth*, so some; but *in the waters*; none of all the savage creatures upon earth come near him for bulk and strength, and it is well for man that he is confined to the waters, and there has a *watch set upon him*, (*chap. vii. 12.*) by the divine providence, for if such a terrible creature were allowed to roam and ravage upon this earth, it would be an unsafe and uncomfortable habitation for the children of men, for whom it is intended. (2.) That he is more bold and daring than any other creature whatsoever. *He is made without fear*: the creatures are as they are made; the leviathan has courage in its constitution, nothing can frighten him, other creatures, quite contrary, seem as much designed for flying, as this for fighting; among men some in their natural temper bold, others are timorous. (3.) That he is himself very proud, tho' lodged in the deep, yet *he beholdeth all high things*, the rolling waves, the impending rocks, the hovering clouds, and the ships under sail with top and top-gallant, this mighty animal beholds with contempt, for he doth not think they either lessen him, or threaten him. Those that are great are apt to be scornful. (4.) *That he is a king over all the children of pride*, i. e. He is the proudest of all proud ones. He has more to be proud of (so Mr Caryl expounds it) than the proudest people in the world have; and so it is a mortification to the haughtiness and lofty looks of men. Whatever bodily accomplishments men are proud of and puffed up with, the leviathan excels them, and is a *king over them*. Some read it as to understand it of God, *He that beholdeth all high things, even he is king over all the children of pride*; he can tame the behemoth, *chap. xl. 19.* and so he can the leviathan, as big as they are, and as stout-hearted as they are. This discourse concerning those two animals was brought in to prove that it is God only who can *look upon proud men and abase them, bring them low and tread them down, and hide them in the dust*, *chap. xl. 11, 12, 13.* and so it concludes with a *quod erat demonstrandum*; there is one that *beholdeth all high things*, and wherein men deal proudly, is above them; he is *king over all the children of pride*; whether brutal or rational, and can make them all either bend or break before him, *Isa. ii. 11.* *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and thus the Lord alone shall be exalted.*

C H A P. XLII.

Solomon saith, Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof, *Ecc. vii. 8.* It was so here in the story of Job; at evening time it was light. Three things we have met with in this book that I confess have troubled me very much; but we find all the three grievances redressed, thoroughly redressed in this chapter, every thing set to rights and well again. (1.) It has been a great trouble to us to see such a holy man as Job was, so fretful and peevish, and uneasy to himself, and especially to hear him quarrel with God, and speak indecently to him; but tho' he thus full he is not utterly cast down, for here he recovers his temper, comes to himself and to his right mind again by repentance, is sorry for what he has said amiss, unsaith it, and humbles himself before God, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) It has been likewise a great trouble to us to see Job and his friends so much at variance, not only differing in their opinions, but giving one another a great many hard words, and passing severe censures one upon another, tho' they were all very wise and good men; but here we have this grievance redressed likewise, the differences between them happily adjusted, the quarrel taken up, all the peevish repetitions they had cast upon one another forgiven and forgotten, and all joining in sacrifices and prayers, mutually accepted of God, *ver. 7—9.* (3.) It has troubled us to see a man of such eminent piety and usefulness as Job was, so grievously afflicted, so pained, so sick, so poor, so reproached, so slighted, and made the very centre of all the calamities of human life; but here we have this grievance redressed too, Job healed of all his ailments, more honoured and beloved than ever, enriched with an estate double to what he had before, surrounded with all the comforts of life, and as great an instance of prosperity as ever he had been of affliction and patience, *ver. 10—17.* And all this is written for our learning, that we, under these and the like discouragements that we meet with, through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope.

1. **T**HEN Job answered the LORD, and said, 2. I know that thou canst *do every thing*, and that no thought can be with-holden from thee. 3. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. 4. Hear, I

beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 5. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. 6. Wherefore I abhor *my self*, and repent in dust and ashes.

The words of Job justifying himself were ended, *chap. xxxi. 40.* After that, he said no more to that purpose: the words of Job, judging and condemning himself, began, *chap. xl. 4, 5.* here he goes on with words to the same purpose; tho' his patience had not its perfect work, his repentance for his impatience had. He is here thoroughly humbled for his folly, and unadvised speaking, and it was forgiven him. Good men will see and own their faults at last, tho' it may be some difficulty to bring them to it. Then when God had said all that to him concerning his own greatness and power appearing in the creatures, *then Job answered the Lord*, (*ver. 1.*) not by way of contradiction, he had promised not so to answer again, *chap. xl. 5.* but by way of submission, and thus we must all answer the calls of God.

1. He subscribes to the truth of God's unlimited power, knowledge, and dominion, to prove which was the scope of God's discourse out of the whirlwind, *ver. 2.* Corrupt passions and practices arise either from some corrupt principles, or from the inconsideration and disbelief of the principles of truth, and therefore true repentance begins in *the acknowledgment of the truth*, 2 Tim. ii. 25. Job here owns his judgment convinced of the greatness, and glory, and perfection of God, from which would follow the conviction of his conscience concerning his own folly in speaking irreverently to him. (1.) He owns that God can do every thing. He that made behemoth and leviathan, and manages both as he pleases, what can be too hard for him to do? He knew this before, and had himself discoursed very well upon the subject, but now he knew it with application; *God had spoken* it once, and then he heard it twice; that *power belongs to God*, and therefore it is the greatest madness and presumption imaginable to contend with him. Thou canst do every thing, and therefore canst raise me out of this low condition, which I have so often foolishly despaired of as impossible: I now *believe thou art able to do this*. (2.) That *no thought can be with-holden from him*, i. e. (1.) There is no thought of ours that he can be hindered from the knowledge of. Not a fretful, discontented, unbelieving, thought is in our minds at any time, but God is a witness to it: it is in vain to contest with him, for we cannot hide our counsels and projects from him; and if he discover them he can defeat them. (2.) There is no thought of his that he can be hindered from the execution of. *Whatever the Lord pleased that did he.* Job had said this passionately, complaining of it, *chap. xxiii. 13.* *What his soul desireth, even that he doth*; now he saith it with pleasure and satisfaction, that *God's counsels shall stand*. If God's thoughts concerning us be *thoughts of good, to give us an expected end*, he cannot be with-held from accomplishing his gracious purposes, whatever difficulties may seem to lie in the way.

2. He owns himself to be guilty of that which God had charged him with in the beginning of his discourse, *ver. 3.* Lord, the very first word thou saidst, was, *Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?* and there needed no more; that word convinced me, I own, *I am the man* that have been so foolish. That word reached my conscience, and set my sin in order before me; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused, *I have hid counsel without knowledge*, I have ignorantly overlooked the counsels and designs of God in afflicting me, and therefore have quarrelled with God, and insisted too much upon my own justification; *Therefore I uttered that I understood not*, i. e. I have passed a judgment upon the dispensations of providence, tho' I was utterly a stranger to the reasons of them. Here, (1.) He owns himself ignorant of the divine counsels, and so we are all. God's judgments are a great deep, which we cannot fathom, much less find out the springs of. We see what God doth, but we neither know why he doth it, what he is driving at, nor what he will bring it to; these are things too wonderful for us, out of our sight to discover, out of our reach to alter, and out of our jurisdiction to judge of; they are things which we know not, it is quite above our capacity to pass a verdict upon them; the reason why we quarrel with providence, is, because we do not understand it: And we must be content to be in the dark about it, until the mystery of God shall be finished.

(2.) He owns himself imprudent and presumptuous in undertaking to discourse of that which he did not understand, and to arraign that which he could not judge of. *He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him.* We wrong our selves, as well as the cause which we undertake, to determine, while we are no competent judges of it.

3. He will not answer, but he will *make supplication to his judge*, as he had said, *chap. ix. 15.* *Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak*, *ver. 4.* not speak either as plaintiff or defendant, (*chap. xiii. 22.*) but as a humble petitioner; not as one that will undertake to teach and prescribe; but as one that desires to learn, and is willing to be prescribed to. Lord, put no more puzzling questions to me, for I am not able to answer thee one of a thousand of those which thou hast put; but give me leave to ask instruction from thee, and do not deny it me, do not upbraid me

me with my folly and self-sufficiency, *Jam. i. 5.* Now he is brought to the prayer Elihu taught him; *That which I see not teach thou me.*

4. He puts himself into the posture of a penitent; and therein goes upon a right principle. In true repentance there must be not only conviction of sin, but contrition and godly sorrow for it, *forrowing according to God, Cor. vii. 9.* Such was Job's sorrow for his sins.

1. Job had an eye to God in his repentance, thought highly of him, and went upon that as the principle of it, *ver. 5. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear* many a time, from my teachers, when I was young; from my friends now of late; I have known something of thy greatness, and power, and sovereign dominion, and yet was not brought, by what I heard, to submit my self to thee as I ought; the notions I had of these things, served me only to talk of, and had not a due influence upon my mind; but now thou hast by immediate revelation discovered thy self to me in thy glorious majesty, *now mine eye sees thee*, now I feel the power of those truths which before I had only the notion of, and therefore now I repent, and unsay what I have foolishly said. Note, (1.) It is a great mercy to have a good education, and to know the things of God by the instructions of his word and ministers; *Faith comes by hearing*, and then it is most likely to come when we hear attentively, and with the *hearing of the ear.* (2.) When the understanding is enlightened by the spirit of grace, our knowledge of divine things as far exceeds what we had before, as that by ocular demonstration exceeds that by report and common fame. By the teachings of men God reveals his Son to us; but by the teachings of his Spirit he reveals his Son in us, *Gal. i. 16.* and so changes us into the same image, *2 Cor. iii. 18.* (3.) God is pleased sometimes to manifest himself most fully to his people by the rebukes of his word and providence: Now I have been afflicted, now I have been told of my faults, now mine eye sees thee. *The rod and reproof give wisdom; Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest.*

2. Job had an eye to himself in his repentance, thought hardly of himself, and thereby expressed his sorrow for his sins, *ver. 6. Wherefore I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.* Observe, 1. It concerns us to be deeply humbled for the sins we are convinced of, and not to rest in a slight superficial displeasure against our selves for them. Even good people that have no gross enormities to repent of, yet must be greatly afflicted in soul for the workings and breakings out of pride, passion, peevishness, and discontent, and all their hasty unadvised speeches; for these we must be pricked to the heart, and be in bitterness. Till the enemy be effectually humbled, the peace will be insecure. 2. Outward expressions of godly sorrow well become penitents, Job repented in dust and ashes. These without an inward change do but mock God; but where they come from sincere contrition of soul, the sinner by them gives glory to God, takes shame to himself, and may be instrumental to bring others to repentance. Job's afflictions had brought him to the ashes, *chap. ii. 8.* he sat down among the ashes; but now his sins brought him thither. True penitents mourn for their sins as heartily as ever they did for any outward afflictions; and are in bitterness, as for an only son, or a first-born, for they are brought to see more evil in their sins than in their troubles. 3. Self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance, *Exek. vi. 9. They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed.* We must not only be angry at ourselves for the wrong and damage we have by sin done to our own souls, but must abhor ourselves, as having by sin made ourselves odious to the pure and holy God, who cannot endure to look upon iniquity. If sin be truly an abomination to us, sin in ourselves will especially be so; the nearer it is to us, the more loathsome it will be. 4. The more we see of the glory and majesty of God, the more we see of the vileness and odiousness of sin, and of ourselves, because of sin, and the more we shall abase and abhor ourselves for it. Now mine eye sees what a God he is whom I have offended, the brightness of that majesty that by wilful sin I have spit in the face of, the tenderness of that mercy which I have spurned at the bowels of; now I see what a just and holy God he is, whose wrath I have incurred, wherefore I abhor myself, *Wo is me, for I am undone, Isa. vi. 5.* God had challenged Job to look upon proud men and abase them; not I, saith Job, I will never pretend to it, I have enough to do to get my own proud heart humbled, to abase that, and bring that low. Let us leave it to God to govern the world, and make it our care in the strength of his grace to govern ourselves and our own hearts well.

7. ¶ And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks, and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for your selves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken
No. xxxviii.

of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. 9. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.

Job in his discourses had complained very much of the censures of his friends, and their hard usage of him, and had appealed to God as judge between him and them, and thought it long that judgment was not given upon the appeal; while God was catechising Job out of the whirlwind, one would have thought that he only was in the wrong, and the cause would certainly go against him; but here, to our great surprise, we find it quite otherwise, and the definitive sentence given in Job's favour. Wherefore judge nothing before the time. Those who are truly righteous before God, may have their righteousness clouded and eclipsed by great and uncommon afflictions, by the severe censures of men, by their own frailties and foolish passions, by the sharp reproofs of the word and conscience, and the deep humiliation of their own spirits, under the sense of God's terrors, and yet in due time these clouds shall all blow over, and God will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day, *Psal. xxxvii. 6.* So he cleared Job's righteousness here, because he, like an honest man, held it fast, and would not let it go. We have here,

1. Judgment given against Job's three friends upon the controversy between them and Job. Elihu is not censured here, for he distinguished himself from the rest in the management of the dispute, and acted not as a party, but as a moderator, and moderation will have its praise with God, whether it have with men or no. In the judgment here given, Job is magnified, and his three friends mortified. While we were examining the discourses on both sides, we could not discern, and therefore durst not determine who was in the right; something of truth we thought they both had on their side, but could not cleave the hair between them, nor would we for all the world, have been to give the decisive sentence upon the case, lest we should have determined wrong; but it is well the judgment is the Lord's, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth, to it we will refer ourselves, and by it we will abide.

Now in the judgment here given,

1. Job is greatly magnified, and comes off with honour. He was but one against three, a beggar now against three princes, and yet having God on his side, he needed not fear coming off well, tho' thousands set themselves against him. Observe here,

(1.) When God appeared for him: *After the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, ver. 7.* After he had convinced and humbled him, and brought him to repentance for what he had said amiss, then he owned him in what he had said well, comforted him, and put honour upon him: Not till then, for we are not ready for God's approbation, till we judge and condemn our selves; but then he thus pleaded his cause, for he that has torn will heal us, he that has smitten will bind us. The Comforter shall convince, *Job. xvi. 8.* See in what method we are to expect divine acceptance, we must first be humbled under divine rebukes. After God by speaking these words had caused grief, he returned and had compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies, for he will not contend for ever, but will debate in measure, and stay his rough wind in the day of his east-wind. Now Job had humbled himself, God exalted him. True penitents shall find favour with God, and what they have said and done amiss, shall no more be mentioned against them. Then God is well pleased with us, when we are brought to abhor our selves.

(2.) How he appeared for him. It is taken for granted that all his offences are forgiven, for if he be dignified as we find he is here, no doubt he is justified. Job had sometimes spoke with great assurance that God would clear him at last, and he was not made ashamed of the hope.

1. God calls him again and again his servant Job; four times in two verses, and he seems to take a pleasure in calling him so, as before his troubles, *chap. i. 8. Hast thou considered my servant Job?* Tho' he be poor and despised, he is my servant for all that, and as dear to me, as when he was in his prosperity: Tho' he has faults, and has appeared to be a man subject to like passions as others, tho' he has contended with me, has gone about to disannul my judgment; and has darkened counsel by words without knowledge, yet he sees his error, and retracts it, and therefore he is my servant Job still. If we still hold fast the integrity and fidelity of servants to God as Job did, tho' we may for a time be deprived of the credit and comfort of the relation, we shall be restored to it at last, as he was. The devil had undertaken to prove Job an hypocrite, his three friends had condemned him as a wicked man, but God will confess those whom he accepts, and will not suffer them to be run down by the malice of hell or earth. If God saith, *well done good and faithful servant*, the matter is not great who saith otherwise.

2. He owns that he had spoken of him the thing that was right, beyond what his antagonists had done: He had given a much better account

account of the divine providence, and nearer to truth than they had done. They had wronged God by making prosperity a mark of the true church, and affliction a certain indication of God's wrath: But Job had done him right, by maintaining that God's love and hatred is to be judged of by what is in men, not by what is before them, *Eccles. ix. 1.* Observe, (1.) Those do the most justice to God and his providence, who have an eye to the rewards and punishments of another world, more than to those of this, and with the prospect of those, solve the difficulties of the present administration. Job had referred things to the future judgment and the future state, more than his friends had done, and therefore he spoke of God that which was right, better than his friends had done. (2.) Tho' Job had spoken some things amiss, even concerning God, whom he made too bold with, yet he is commended for what he spoke that was right. We must not only not reject that which is true and good, but must not deny it its true praise, tho' there appear in it a mixture of human frailty and infirmity. (3.) Job was in the right, and his friends in the wrong, and yet he was in pain and they at ease, which is a plain evidence that we cannot judge of men and their sentiments, by looking in their faces or purses, he only can do it infallibly, who sees mens hearts.

3. He will pass his word for Job, that, notwithstanding all the wrong his friends had done him, he is so good a man, and of such a humble tender forgiving spirit, that he will very readily pray for them, and use his interest in heaven on their behalf. My servant Job will pray for you, I know he will. I have pardoned him, and he has the comfort of it, and therefore he will pardon you.

4. He appoints him to be the priest of this congregation, and promiseth to accept him, and his mediation for his friends. Take your sacrifices to my servant Job, for him will I accept. Those whom God washes from their sins, he makes to himself kings and priests. True penitents shall not only find favour as petitioners for themselves, but be accepted as intercessors for others also. It was a great honour God hereby put upon Job, in appointing him to offer sacrifice for his friends, as formerly he used to do for his own children, *chap. i. 5.* And a happy preface it was, of his restoration to his prosperity again, and indeed a good step towards it, that he was thus restored to the priesthood. Thus he became a type of Christ, thro' whom alone we and our spiritual sacrifices are *acceptable to God*, see *1 Pet. ii. 5.* Go to my servant Job, to my servant Jesus, (from whom for a time he hid his face) put your services into his hand, make use of him as your advocate, for him will I accept, but out of him, you must expect to be dealt with according to your folly. And as Job prayed and offered sacrifice for those that had grieved and wounded his spirit, so Christ prayed and died for his persecutors, and ever lives *making intercession for his transgressors*.

2. Job's friends are greatly mortified and come off with a slur. They were good men, and did belong to God, and therefore he would not let them lie still in their mistake no more than Job, but having humbled him by a discourse out of the whirlwind, takes another course to humble them. Job, who was dearest to him, was first chidden, but the rest in their turn. When they heard Job talked to, it is probable they flattered themselves with a conceit that they were in the right, and Job in all the fault, but God soon took them to task, and made them know the contrary. In most disputes and controversies, there is something amiss on both sides, either in the merits of the cause, or in the management, or both, and it is fit both sides should be told of it, and made to see their errors. God addresseth this to Eliphaz, not only as the senior, but as the ringleader in the attack, made upon Job. Now,

1. God tells them plainly, they had *not spoken of him the thing that was right like Job*, i. e. they had censured and condemned Job upon a false hypothesis, had represented God fighting against Job, as an enemy, when really he was only trying him as a friend; and this was not right. Those do not say well of God, who represent his fatherly chastisements of his own children, as judicial punishments, and who cut them off from his favour upon the account of them. Note, It is a dangerous thing to judge uncharitably of the spiritual and eternal state of others, for in so doing, we may perhaps condemn those whom God has accepted, which is a great provocation to him, it is offending his little ones; and he takes himself to be wronged in all the wrongs that are done to them.

2. He assures them he was angry with them. *My wrath is kindled against thee, and thy two friends.* God is very angry with those who despise and reproach their brethren who insult over them, and judge hardly of them, either for their calamities or for their infirmities. Tho' they were wise and good men, yet when they spoke amiss, God was angry with them, and let them know it.

3. He requires from them a sacrifice to make atonement for what they had said amiss: They must bring each of them seven bullocks, and each of them seven rams, to be offered up to God for a burnt-offering, for it should seem that before the law of Moses all sacrifices, even those of atonement, were wholly burnt, and therefore were so called. They thought they had spoken wonderful well, and that God was beholden to them for

pleading his cause, and owed them a good fee for it, but they are told that, quite contrary, he is displeased with them, requires from them a sacrifice, and threatens that otherwise he will deal with them after their folly. Many times God is angry at that in us, which we are ourselves proud of, and sees much amiss in that which we think was well done.

4. He orders them to go to Job, and beg of him to offer their sacrifices, and pray for them, or otherwise they should not be accepted. By this God designed, (1.) To humble them, and lay them low. They thought that they only were the favourites of heaven, and that Job had no interest there, but God gives them to understand, that he had a better interest there than they had, and stood fairer for God's acceptance than they did. The day may come when those who despise and censure God's people, will court their favour, and be *made to know that God has loved them*, *Rev. iii. 9.* The foolish virgins will beg oil of the wife. (2.) To oblige them to make their peace with Job, as the condition of their making their peace with God. *If thy brother has ought against thee* (as Job had a great deal against them) *first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Satisfaction must first be made for wrong done, according as the nature of the thing requires, before we can hope to obtain from God the forgiveness of sin. See how thoroughly God espoused the cause of his servant Job, and engaged in it; God will not be reconciled to those that have offended him, till they have first begged his pardon, and he is reconciled to them. Job, and his friends had differed in their opinion about many things, and been too keen in their reflections one upon another, but now they were to be made friends, and in order to that, they are not to argue the matter over again, and try to give it a new turn, that might be done endlessly; but they must agree in a sacrifice and a prayer, and that must reconcile them: In affection and devotion they must unite, when they could not concur in the same sentiments. Those who differ in judgment about lesser things, yet are one in Christ the great sacrifice, and meet at the same throne of grace, and therefore ought to love and bear with one another. Once more, observe, that when God was angry with Job's friends, he did himself put them in a way to make their peace with him. Our quarrels with God always begin on our part, but the reconciliation begins on his.

2. The acquiescence of Job's friends in this judgment given, *ver. 9.* They were good men, and as soon as they understood what the mind of the Lord was, they did as he commanded them, and that speedily, and without gainsaying, tho' it was against the grain to flesh and blood, to court him thus whom they had condemned. Note, Those who would be reconciled to God, must carefully use the prescribed means and methods of reconciliation: Peace with God is to be had only in his own way, and upon his own terms, and they will never seem hard to those who know how to value the privilege, but they will be glad of it upon any terms tho' never so humbling. Job's friends had all joined in accusing Job, and now they join in begging his pardon; those that have sinned together should repent together. They that appeal to God, as both Job and his friends had often done, must resolve to stand by his award, whether pleasing or unpleasing to their own mind. And they that conscientiously observe God's commands, need not doubt but to gain his favour; *the Lord also accepted Job*, and his friends in answer to his prayer. It is not said he accepted them, tho' that is implied, but he accepted Job for them; so he has *made us accepted in the beloved*, *Eph. i. 6.* *Mat. iii. 17.* Job did not insult over his friends, upon the testimony God had given concerning him, and the submission they were obliged to make to him, but God being graciously reconciled to him, he was easily reconciled to them, and then God accepted him. This is that we should aim at in all our prayers and services, to be accepted of the Lord, this must be the top of our ambition, not to have praise of men, but to please God.

10. And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold. 12. So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. 13. He had also seven sons, and three daughters. 14. And he called the name of the first, Jemima, and the name of the second, Kezia, and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. 15. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their

their brethren. 16. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons sons, even four generations. 17. So Job died being old, and full of days.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, (saith the apostle, Jam. v. 11.) and have seen the end of the Lord, i. e. what end the Lord at length put to his troubles. In the beginning of this book we had Job's patience, under his troubles for an example, here, in the close, for our encouragement to follow that example, we have the happy issue of his troubles, and the prosperous condition to which he was restored after them, which confirms us in counting them happy, which endure. And the extraordinary prosperity which Job was crowned with after his afflictions; perhaps, was intended to be to us christians a type and figure of the glory and happiness of heaven, which the afflictions of this present time are working for us; and in which they will issue at last, and what will be more than double to all the delights and satisfactions we now enjoy, as Job's after-prosperity was to his former, tho' then he was the greatest of all the men of the east. He that rightly endureth temptation when he is tried, shall receive a crown of life, Jam. i. 12. As Job when he was tried, received all the wealth, and honour, and comfort which here we have an account of.

1. God returned in ways of mercy to him; and his thoughts concerning him, *thoughts of good and not of evil, to give the expected (nay, the unexpected) end, Jer. xxix. 11.* His troubles began in Satan's malice, which God restrained; his restoration began in God's mercy, which Satan could not oppose. Job's forest complaint, and indeed the sorrowful accent of all his complaints, on which he laid the greatest emphasis, was, that God appeared against him: but now God plainly appeared for him, and *watched over him to build and to plant, like as he had (at least in his apprehension) watched over him to pluck up and to throw down, Jer. xxxi. 28.* This put a new face upon his affairs immediately, and every thing now looked as pleasing and promising, as before it had looked gloomy and frightful. (1.) God *turned his captivity, i. e. he redressed his grievances, and took away all the causes of his complaints: he loosed him from the bond with which Satan had now for a great while bound him, and delivered him out of those cruel hands into which he had delivered him.* We may suppose that presently all his bodily pains and distempers were healed, so suddenly and so thoroughly that the cure was next to miraculous: *His flesh became fresher than a child's, and he returned to the days of his youth:* and that (which was more) he sensibly felt a very great alteration in his mind, it was calm and easy, and the toss was all over, his disquieting thoughts were all vanished, his fears silenced, and the consolations of God were now as much the delight of his soul, as his terrors had been its burthen. The tide thus turned, and his troubles began to ebb as fast as they had flowed, just then *when he was praying for his friends, praying over his sacrifice which he offered for them.* Mercy did not return when he was disputing with his friends, no, not tho' he had right on his side, but when he was praying for them, for God is better served and pleased with our warm devotions, than with our warm disputations. When Job compleated his repentance by this instance of his *forgiving men their trespasses*, then God compleated his remission, by *turning his captivity.* Note, We are really doing our business when we are *praying for our friends*, if we pray in a right manner, for in those prayers there is not only faith but love. Christ has taught us to *pray with and for others*, in teaching us to say, *Our Father*; and in seeking mercy for others, we may find mercy for our selves. Our Lord Jesus has his exaltation and dominion there, where he *ever lives making intercession.* Some by the turning of Job's captivity understand the restitution which the Sabeans and Chaldeans made of the cattle which they had taken from him, God wonderfully inclining them to do it; and with these he began the world again. Probably it was so; those spoilers had *swallowed down his riches*, but they were forced to *vomit them up again, chap. xx. 15.* But I rather understand this more generally of the turn now given. (2.) God doubled his possessions; *also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.* It is likely he did at first by some way or other intimate to him that it was his gracious purpose, by degrees, in due time to bring him to such height of prosperity, that he should have twice as much as ever he had, for the encouraging of his hope, and the quickning of his industry, and that it might appear, that this wonderful increase was a special token of God's favour. And it may be considered as intended, (1.) To balance his losses: he suffered for the glory of God, and therefore God made it up to him with advantage, and allowed him more than interest upon interest. God will take care that none shall lose by him. (2.) To recompense his patience, and his confidence in God, which (notwithstanding the workings of corruption) he did not cast away, but still held fast, and that is it, which has a *great recompence of reward, Heb. x. 35.* Job's friends had often put their severe censure of Job upon this issue, *If thou wert pure, and upright, surely now he would awake for thee, chap. viii. 6.* But he doth not awake for thee, therefore *thou art not upright*; well, saith God, tho' your argument be not concluding, I will even by that demonstrate the integrity of my

servant Job, his latter end shall greatly increase, and by that it shall appear, since you will have it so, that it was not for any injustice in his hands, that he suffered the loss of all things. Now it appeared Job had reason to bless God for taking away, (as he did, *chap. i. 21.*) since it made so good a return.

2. His old acquaintance, neighbours and relations, were very kind to him, *ver. 11.* They had been estranged from him, and it was not the least of the grievances of his afflicted state: he bitterly complained of their unkindness, *chap. xix. 13, &c.* But now they visited him with all possible expressions of affection and respect. (1.) They put an honour upon him, in coming to dine with him, as formerly, but (we may suppose) privately bringing their entertainment along with them, so that he had the reputation of feasting them, without the expence. (2.) They sympathized with him, and shewed a tender concern for him, such as becomes brethren. They bemoaned him when they talked over all the calamities of his afflicted state, and comforted him, when they took notice of God's gracious returns to him. They wept for his griefs, and rejoiced in his joys, and proved not such miserable comforters as his three friends, that at first were so forward and officious to attend him. These were not such great men, nor such learned and eloquent men as those, but they proved much more skilful and kind in comforting Job. God sometimes chuseth the foolish and weak things of the world, as for conviction, so for comfort. (3.) They made a collection among them for the repair of his losses, and the setting of him up again: they did not think it enough to say *be warmed, be filled*, but gave him such things as would be of use to him, *Jam. ii. 16.* Every one gave him *a piece of money*, some more it is likely, and some less, according to their ability, and every one *an ear-ring of gold*, (an ornament much used by the children of the east) which would be as good as money to him: This was a superfluity which they could well spare, and the rule is, that our abundance must be a supply to our brethren's necessity. But why did Job's relations now at length, shew this kindness to him? (1.) God put it in their hearts to do so, and every creature is that to us that he makes it to be. Job had acknowledged God in their estrangement from him, for which he now rewarded him, in turning them to him again. (2.) Perhaps some of them withdrew from him because they thought him an hypocrite, but now his integrity was made manifest, they returned to him, and to communion with him again. When God was friends with him, they were all willing to be friends with him, *Psal. cxix. 74, 79.* Others of them, it may be, withdrew, because he was poor, and sore, and a rueful spectacle, but now he began to get up his back again, they were willing to renew their acquaintance with him. Swallow-friends that are gone in winter, will return in the spring, tho' their friendship is of little value. (3.) Perhaps the rebuke which God had given to Eliphaz, and the other two, for their unkindness to Job, awakened the rest of his friends to return to their duty. Reproofs to others we should thus take as admonitions and instructions to us. (4.) *Job prayed for his friends*, and then they flocked about him, overcome by his kindness, and every one desiring an interest in his prayers. The more we pray for our friends and relations, the more comfort we may expect in them.

3. His estate strangely increased, by the blessing of God upon the little that his friends gave him. He thankfully received their courtesy, and did not think it below him to have his estate repaired by contributions, he did not, on the one hand, urge his friends to raise money for him, he acquits himself from that, *chap. vi. 22. Did I say, bring unto me, or give me a reward of your substance?* and yet what they brought he thankfully accepted, and did not upbraid them with their former unkindnesses, nor ask them why they did not do this sooner: he was neither so covetous and griping as to ask their charity, nor so proud and ill-natured as to refuse it when they offered it. And he being in so good a temper, God gave him that which was far better than their money, and ear-rings, and that was *his blessing, ver. 12.* The Lord comforted him now according to the days wherein he had afflicted him, and *blessed his latter end more than his beginning.* Observe (1.) *The blessing of the Lord makes rich:* It is he that gives us power to get wealth, and gives success in honest endeavours. Those therefore that would thrive must have an eye to God's blessing, and never go out of it, no, not into the warm sun; and those that have thriven, must not sacrifice to their own net, but own their obligations to God for his blessing. (2.) That blessing can make very rich, and sometimes makes good people so. Those that are become rich by getting, think they can easily make themselves very rich by saving, but as those that have little must depend upon God to make it much, so those that have much must depend upon God to make it more, and to double it, *else ye have sown much, and bring in little, Hag. i. 6.* (1.) The last days of a good man sometimes prove his best days, his last works his best works, his last comforts his best comforts, for his path, like that of the morning light, shines more and more to the perfect day. Of a wicked man it is said *his last state is worse than his first, Luke xi. 26.* But of the upright man, that *his end is peace*, and sometimes the nearer it is the clearer are the views of it. In respect of outward prosperity, God is pleased sometimes to make the latter end of a good man's life, more comfortable than the former part of it

it has been, and strangely to out-do the expectations of his afflicted people, who thought they should never have lived to see better days, that we may not despair, even in the depths of adversity; we know not what good times we may yet be reserved for in our latter end. *Non si male, nunc & olim, sic erit*, it may be well, tho' now it is ill. Job in his affliction had wished to be as in months passed, as rich as he had been before, and quite despaired of that; but God is often better to us than our own fears, nay, than our own wishes, for Job's possessions were doubled to him; the number of his cattle, his sheep and camels, his oxen and she-asses, is just double here to what it was, chap. i. 3. This is a remarkable instance of the extent of the divine providence to things that seem minute, as this, of the exact number of a man's cattle: As also of the harmony of providence, and the reference of one event to another; for *known unto God are all his works, from the beginning to the end*. Job's other possessions, no doubt, were increased in proportion to his cattle, his lands, money, servants, &c. So that if before he was the greatest of all the men of the east, what was he now?

His family was built up again, and he had great comfort in his children, ver. 13, 14, 15. The last of his afflictions that are recorded, chap. i. and the most grievous, was the death of all his children at once: his friends upbraided him with it, chap. viii. 4. But God repaired even that breach, in process of time, either by the same wife, or, she being dead, by another. (1.) The number of his children was the same as before, *seven sons and three daughters*: some give this reason why they were not doubled as his cattle were, because his children that were dead were not lost, but gone before, to a better world; and therefore if he have but the same number of them, they may be reckoned doubled, for he hath two fleeces of children, (as I may say) *Mahanaim*, two hosts, one in heaven, the other on earth, and in both he is rich. (2.) The names of his daughters are here registred, ver. 14. because in the significations of them they seemed designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's great goodness to him in the surprizing change of his condition; he called the first *Jemima*, the day, (whence, perhaps, Diana had her name) because of the shining forth of his prosperity, after a dark night of affliction. The next *Kezia*, a spice of a very fragrant smell, because (saith bishop Patrick) God

had healed his stinking ulcers. The third *Keren-happach*, i. e. *plenty restored*, or a horn of paint, because (saith he) God had wiped away the tears which fouled his face, chap. xvi. 16. Concerning these daughters we are here told, ver. 15: (1.) That God made them great beauties, *no women so fair as the daughters of Job*. In the Old Testament we often find women praised for their beauty, as Sarah, Rebekah, and many others, but we never find any women in the New Testament, whose beauty is in the least taken notice of, no not the virgin Mary herself, because the beauty of holiness is that which is brought to a much clearer light by the gospel. (2.) That their father (God enabling him to do it) made them great fortunes, pardon the vulgar expression. He gave them inheritance among their brethren, and did not turn them off with small portions, as most did. It is probable they had some extraordinary personal merit, which Job had an eye to in this extraordinary favour he shewed them. Perhaps, they excelled their brethren in wisdom and piety, and therefore that they might continue in his family, to be a stay and blessing to it, he made them co-heirs with their brethren.

5. His life was long. What age he was of when his troubles came, we are no where told, but here we are told that he lived an hundred and forty years, whence some conjecture that he was seventy when he was in his troubles, and so his age was doubled, as other his possessions.

1. He lived to have much of the comfort of this life, for he saw his posterity to the fourth generation, ver. 16. Tho' his children were not doubled to him, yet in his childrens children, (and those are the crown of old men) they were more than doubled. As God appointed to Adam another seed, instead of that which was slain, Gen. iv. 25. So he did to Job, with advantage. God has ways to repair the losses, and balance the griefs of those who are written childless, as Job was when he had buried all his children.

2. He lived till he had enough of it, for he died full of days, satisfied with living in this world, and willing to leave it; not peevishly so, as in the days of his affliction, but piously so; and thus as Eliphaz had encouraged him to hope, he *came to his grave like a shock of corn in his season*.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

Of the BOOK of

P S A L M S.

We have now before us one of the choicest and most excellent parts of all the Old Testament; nay, so much is there in it of CHRIST and his gospel, as well as of GOD and his law, that it has been called the abstract or summary of both Testaments. The history of Israel, which we were long upon, led us to camps and council-boards, and there entertained and instructed us in the knowledge of GOD. The book of Job brought us into the schools, and treated us with profitable disputations concerning GOD and his providence; but this book brings us into the sanctuary, draws us off from converse with men, with the politicians, philosophers, or disputers of this world, and directs us into communion with GOD, by solacing and reposing our souls in him, lifting up and letting out our hearts towards him. Thus may we be in the mount with GOD; and we understand not our selves, if we say not, It is good to be here.

Let us consider, (1.) The title of this book; it is called, (1.) The Psalms; under that title it is referred to Luke xxiv. 44. The Hebrew calls it Tehillim, which properly signifies psalms of praise; because many of them are such; but Psalms is a more general word, meaning all metrical composiures fitted to be sung, which may as well be historical, doctrinal, or supplicatory, as laudatory: Tho' singing be properly the voice of joy, yet the intention of songs is of a much greater latitude, to assist the memory, and both to express and to excite all the other affections, as well as this of joy: The priests had a mournful muse as well as joyful ones; and the divine institution of singing psalms, is thus largely intended; for we are directed not only to praise GOD, but to teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, Col. iii. 16. (2.) It is called the Book of Psalms; so it is quoted by St Peter, Acts i. 20. It is a collection of psalms, of all the psalms that were divinely inspired, which, tho' composed at several times, and upon several occasions, are here put together without any reference to, or dependence upon, one another; thus they were preserved from being scattered and lost, and laid in so much greater readiness for the service of the church. See what a good master we serve, and what pleasantness there is in wisdom's ways, when we are not only commanded to sing at our work, and have cause enough given us to do so, but have words also put in our mouths, and songs prepared to our hands.

(2.) The author of this book, it is no doubt, derived originally from the blessed Spirit. They are spiritual songs, words which the Holy Ghost teacheth: the penman of most of them was David the son of Jesse, who is therefore called the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. Some that have not his name in their titles, yet are expressly ascribed to him elsewhere, as the second psalm, Act. iv. 25. and Psal. xcvi. and cv. 1. Chron. xvi. One psalm is expressly said to be the prayer of Moses, Psal. xc. and that some of the psalms were penned by Asaph, is intimated, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. where they are said to praise the Lord, in the words of David and Asaph, who is there called a seer or prophet. Some of the Psalms seemed to have been penned long after, as Psal. cxxxvii. at the time of the captivity in Babylon, but for certain the far greater part of them were penned by David himself, whose genius lay towards poetry and musick, and who was raised up, qualified, and spirited, for the establishing of the ordinance of singing Psalms in the church of GOD, as Moses and Aaron were in their day for the settling of the ordinances of sacrifice; theirs is superseded, but this remains, and will to the end of time, when it shall be swallowed up in the songs of eternity. Herein David was a type of CHRIST, who descended from him, not from Moses, because he came

to take away sacrifice, (the family of Moses was soon lost and extinct) but to establish and perpetuate joy and praise; for of the family of David, in CHRIST there shall be no end.

(3.) The scope of it. It is manifestly intended, (1.) To assist the exercises of natural religion, and to kindle in the souls of men those devout affections which we owe to GOD as our creator, owner, ruler, and benefactor. The book of Job helps to prove our first principles of the divine perfections and providence; but this helps to improve them in prayers and praises, and professions of desire towards him, dependence on him, and an entire devotedness and resignation to him. Other parts of scripture shew that GOD is infinitely above man, and his sovereign LORD; but this shews us, that notwithstanding that, he may be conversed with by us sinful worms of the earth, and there are ways, in which, if it be not our own fault, we may keep up communion with him in all the various conditions of human life. (2.) To advance the excellencies of revealed religion, and in the most pleasing powerful manner to recommend it to the world. There is indeed little or nothing in all the book of Psalms of the ceremonial law: Tho' sacrifice and offering were yet to continue many ages, yet they are here represented as things which GOD did not desire, Psal. xl. 6.—li. 16. as things comparatively little, and which in time were to vanish away. But the word and law of GOD, those parts of it which are moral, and of perpetual obligation, are here all along magnified and made honourable; no where more: And CHRIST the crown and centre of revealed religion, the foundation, corner, and top-stone of that blessed building, is here clearly spoken of in type and prophecy; both his sufferings and the glory that should follow, and the kingdom he should set up in the world, which GOD's covenant with David, concerning his kingdom, was to have its accomplishment in. What a high value doth this book put upon the word of GOD, his statutes and judgments, his covenant, and the great and precious promises of it, and how doth it recommend them to us as our guide and stay, and our heritage for ever.

(4.) The use of it. All scripture being given by inspiration of GOD, is profitable to convey divine light into our understanding; but this book is of singular use with that to convey divine life and power, and a holy heat into our affections. There is no one book of scripture that is more helpful to the devotions of the saints than this, and it has been so in all ages of the church, ever since it was written, and the several parts of it delivered to the chief musician, for the service of the church. (1.) It is of use to be sung. Further than David's psalms we may go, but we need not go for hymns and spiritual songs. What the rules of the Hebrew metre were, even the learned are not certain. But these psalms ought to be rendered according to the metre of every language, at least so as that they may be sung, for the edification of the church: And methinks it is a great comfort to us, when we are singing David's psalms, that we are offering the very same praises to GOD, that were offered him in the days of David, and other the godly kings of Judah. So rich, so well made are these divine poems, that they can never be exhausted, can never be worn thread-bare. (2.) It is of use to be read and opened by the ministers of CHRIST, as containing great and excellent truths, and rules concerning good and evil. Our Lord JESUS expounded the psalms to his disciples, the gospel-psalms, and opened their understandings (for he had the key of David) to understand them, Luke xxiv. 44.

(3.) It is of use to be read and meditated upon by all good people: It is a full fountain, out of which we may all be drawing water with joy. The Psalmist's experiences are of great use for our direction, caution and encouragement: in telling us, as he often doth, what passed between GOD and his soul, he lets us know what we may expect from GOD, and what he will expect and require, and graciously accept from us. David was a man after God's own heart, and therefore those who find themselves in some measure according to his heart, have reason to hope that they are renewed by the grace of GOD after the image of GOD, and may have much comfort in the testimony of their consciences for them, that they can heartily say Amen to David's prayers and praises. (2.) Even the Psalmist's expressions too are of great use; and by them the Spirit helps our praying infirmities, because we know not what to pray for as we ought. In all our approaches to GOD, as well as in our first returns to GOD, we are directed to take with us words, Hos. xiv. 2. these words, words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. If we make David's psalms familiar to us, as we ought to do, whatever errand we have at the throne of grace, by way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, we may from thence be assisted in the delivery of it; whatever devout affection is working in us, holy desire or hope, sorrow or joy, we may there find apt words wherewith to clothe them; sound speech which cannot be condemned. It will be good to collect the most proper and lively expressions of devotion which we find here, and to methodize them, and reduce them to the several heads of prayer, that they may be the more ready to us. Or we may take sometimes one choice psalm, and sometimes another, and pray it over, that is, enlarge upon each verse in our own thoughts, and offer up our meditations to GOD, as they arise from the expressions we find there. The learned Dr Hammond, in his preface to his paraphrase on the Psalms, sect. 29. saith, "That going over a few psalms with these interpositions of mental devotion, suggested, animated, and maintained by the native life and vigour which is in the psalms, is much to be preferred before the saying over of the whole Psalter, since nothing is more fit to be avorted in religious offices, than their degenerating into heartless dispirited recitations." If, as St Austin adviseth, we form our spirit by the affection of the psalm, we may then be sure of acceptance with GOD, in using the language of it. Nor is it only our devotion, and the affections of our mind that the book of Psalms assists, teaching us how to offer praise so as to glorify GOD, but it is also a directory to the actions of our lives, and teacheth us how to order our conversation aright, so as that in the end we may see the salvation of GOD, Psal. l. 6. The Psalms were thus serviceable to the Old Testament church, but to us christians they may be of more use than they could be to them who lived before the coming of CHRIST; for as Moses's sacrifices, so David's songs are expounded and made more intelligible by the gospel of CHRIST, which lets us within the veil, so that if to David's prayers and praises, we add St Paul's prayers in his epistles, and the new songs in the revelation, we shall be thoroughly furnished for this good work, for the scripture perfected, makes the man of GOD perfect.

As to the division of this book, we need not be solicitous; there is no connection (or very seldom) between one psalm and another, nor any reason discernable for the placing of them in the order wherein we here find them, but it seems to be antient, for that which is now the second psalm, was so in the apostles time, Acts

xlii. 33. *The vulgar Latin joins the ix. and x. together, all popish authors quote by that, so that from thenceforward throughout the book, their number is one short of ours, our xi. is their x. our cxix. their cxviii. But then they divide the cxlvii. into two, and so make up the number of cl. Some have endeavoured to reduce the psalms to proper heads, according to the matter of them, but there is many times such a variety of matter in one and the same psalm, that it cannot be done with any certainty; but the seven penitential Psalms have been in a particular manner singled out by the devotions of many. They are reckoned to be the vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, and cxliii. The psalms have antiently been divided into five books, each concluding with Amen, Amen, or Hallelujah, the first ending with Psal. xli. the second with Psal. lxxii, the third with Psal. lxxxix, the fourth with Psal. cvi. the fifth with Psal. cl. Others divide them into three fifties; others into sixty parts, for two for every day of the month, one for the morning, the other for the evening. Let good christians divide them for themselves, so as may best increase their acquaintance with them, that they may have them at hand upon all occasions, and may sing them in the spirit and with the understanding.*

P S A L M I.

This is a psalm of instruction concerning good and evil, setting before us life and death, the blessing and the curse, that we may take the right way which leads to happiness, and avoid that which will certainly end in our misery and ruin. The different character and condition of godly people and wicked people; those that serve God, and those that serve him not, is here plainly stated in a few words; so that every man if he will be faithful to himself, may here see his own face, and then read his own doom. That division of the children of men into saints and sinners, righteous and unrighteous, the children of God and the children of the wicked one; as it is antient, ever since the struggle began between sin and grace, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; so it is lasting, and will survive all other divisions and sub-divisions of men into high and low, rich and poor, bond and free; for by this mens everlasting state will be determined, and the distinction will last as long as heaven and hell. This psalm shows us; (1.) The holiness and happiness of a godly man, ver. 1—3. (2.) The sinfulness and misery of a wicked man, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The ground and reason of both, ver. 6. Whoever collected the psalms of David, (probably it was Ezra) with good reason put this psalm first, as a preface to the rest, because it is absolutely necessary to the acceptance of our devotions that we be righteous before God; for it is only the prayer of the upright that is his delight, and therefore that we be right in our notions of blessedness, and in our choice of the way that leads to it. Those are not fit to put up good prayers that do not walk in good ways.

1. **B**lessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, that those may first take the comfort of that to whom it belongs. Here is,

1. A description given of the godly man's spirit and way by which we are to try ourselves. The Lord knows them that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer the character, which is indeed both the command of the law, that we are bound in duty to obey, and the condition of the promise, that we are bound in interest to fulfil. The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chuseth to walk by, and to take his measures from. It is of great consequence to us what we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world, or the word of God. An error in the choice of our standard and leader, is original and fatal; but if we be right here, we are in a fair way to do well.

1. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the conduct of evil-doers, and will not be led by them, ver. 1. *He walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, &c.* This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the commandments of their God, must say to evil-doers, *Depart from us*, Psal. cxix. 115. And departing from evil, is that in which wisdom begins. (1.) He sees evil-doers round about him, the world is full of them, they walk on every side; they are here described by three characters, *ungodly, sinners, and scornful*. See by what steps men arrive to the height of impiety; *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*. They are ungodly first, casting off the fear of God, and living in the neglect of their duty to him: But they rest not there; when the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be sinners, i. e. they break out into open rebellion against God, and engage in the service of sin and Satan; omissions make way

for commissions; and by these the heart is so hardened, that at length they come to be scornful, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down hill, the bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others, and advocates for Baal. The word which we translate *ungodly*, signifies such as are unsettled: aim at no certain end, and walk by no certain rule; but are at the command of every lust, and at the beck of every temptation: The word for *sinners*, such as are determined for the practice of sin, and set it up as their trade: and then the *scornful*, are those that set their mouths against the heavens. These the good man sees with a sad heart, they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul. But, (2.) He shuns them wherever he sees them. He doth not do as they do; and that he may not, he doth not converse familiarly with them. (1.) He doth not walk in the counsel of the ungodly; he is not present at their counsels, nor doth he advise with them; tho' they are never so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly they shall not be the men of his counsel, he doth not consent to them, nor say as they say (Luke. xxiii. 51.) doth not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they use to give, and take. The ungodly are forward to give their advice against religion, and it is managed so artfully, that we have reason to bless our selves from it, and to think ourselves happy if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it. (2.) He stands not in the way of sinners, i. e. He avoids doing as they do; their way shall not be his way, he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it, as the sinner doth, who sets himself in a way that is not good, Psal. xxxvi. 4. He avoids (as much as may be) being where they are: that he may not imitate them, he will not associate with them, nor chuse them for his companions. He doth not stand in their way to be picked up by them, (Prov. vii. 8.) but keeps as far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, Prov. iv. 14, 15. He that would be kept from harm, must keep out of harm's way. (3.) He sits not in the seat of the scornful; he doth not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their wickedness, and please themselves with the fearedness of their own consciences: he doth not associate with those that sit in close cabal, to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the devil's kingdom; or that sit in open judgment, magisterially to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards, is the seat of the scornful, Psal. lxxix. 12. Happy is the man that never sits in it, Hof. vii. 5.

2. A godly man that he may do that which is good, and cleave to it, submits to the conduct of the word of God, and makes that familiar to him, ver. 2. This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly, and fortifies him against their temptations, *By the words of thy lips, I have kept me from the path of the deceiver*, Psal. xvii. 4. We need not court the fellowship of sinners either for pleasure or improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God, and with God himself in and by his word, *When thou wakest, it shall talk with thee*, Prov. vi. 22. We may judge of our spiritual state by this, what is the law of God to us? what account do we make of it, what place has it in us? See here, (1.) The entire affection which a good man has for the law of God. His delight is in it. He delights in it, tho' it be a law, a yoke, because it is the law of God which is holy, just, and good, which he freely consents to, and so delights in it after the inner man, Rom. vii. 16, 22. All that are well-pleased there is a God, cannot but be well-pleased there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him. (2.) The intimate acquaintance which a good man keeps up with the word of God, *In that law doth he meditate day and night*; and by this it appears his delight is in it, for what we love, we love to think of, Psal. cxix. 97. To meditate in God's word, is to discourse with our selves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things, and experience the favour and power of them in our hearts. This we must do day and night, i. e. we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God as the rule of our actions, and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts accordingly

accordingly upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time amiss for the meditating on the word of God, nor any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and the night; but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day, and with the repose and slumbers of every night; *When I awake, I am still with thee.*

2. An assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves to answer the character of such.

1. In general, he is blessed, *ver. 1.* God blesteth him, and that blessing will make him happy. Blessednesses are to him. Blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make him completely happy; none of the ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When he undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for after all, those only are happy, truly happy, that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness, than to know wherein the blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness is not only the way to happiness, (*Rev. xxii. 14.*) but happiness itself; supposing there were not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man that keeps in the way of his duty.

2. His blessedness is here illustrated by a similitude, *ver. 3.* *He shall be like a tree*, fruitful and flourishing: this is the effect, (1.) Of his pious practice; he meditates in the law of God, turns that in *succum & sanguinem*, and that makes him like a tree. The more we converse with the word of God, the better furnished we are for every good word and work. Or, (2.) Of the promised blessing: he is blessed of the Lord, and therefore *he shall be like a tree*. The divine blessing produceth real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man, (1.) That he is planted by the grace of God: these trees were by nature wild-olives, and will continue so till they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself, it is *the planting of the Lord*, and therefore he must in it be glorified, *Isa. lxi. 3.* *The trees of the Lord are full of sap.* (2.) That he is placed by the means of grace; here called *the rivers of water*, those rivers which make glad the city of our God, *Psal. lxvi. 4.* from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour, but in secret undiscerned ways. (3.) That his practices shall be fruit abounding to a good account, *Phil. iv. 17.* To those whom God first blessed, he said, *Be fruitful*, *Gen. i. 22.* And still the comfort and honour of fruitfulness is a recompence for the labour of it. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace, that both in the temper of their minds, and in the tenor of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth fruit. And be it observed to the praise of the great dresser of the vineyard, they bring forth their fruit, (that which is required of them) in due season, when it is most beautiful and most useful; improving every opportunity of doing good, and doing it in its proper time. (4.) That his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay, *His leaf also shall not wither*. Those who bring forth only the leaves of profession without any good fruit, even their leaf will wither, and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit: the laurels he has won shall never wither. (5.) That prosperity shall attend him wherever he goes, *prosperity*: Whatever he doth, in conformity to the law, it shall prosper and succeed to his mind, or above his hope.

In singing these verses, being duly affected with the malignant and dangerous nature of sin, the transcendent excellencies of the divine law, and the power and efficacy of God's grace, from which our fruit is found, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another to watch against sin, and all approaches towards it, to converse much with the word of God, and abound in the fruits of righteousness: and in praying over them, we must seek to God for his grace both to fortify us against every evil word and work, and to furnish us for every good word and work.

4. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Here is, 1. The description of the ungodly given, *ver. 4.* (1.) In general, they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition. *They are not so.* The LXX emphatically repeats this, *not so* the ungodly, they are *not so*; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit, but grapes of Sodom, they cumber the ground. (2.) In particular, whereas

the righteous are like valuable, useful, fruitful trees, they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away, the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the flower desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are light and vain, they have no substance in them, no solidity, they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no steadfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind doth the chaff, which is never gathered or looked after more. The chaff may be for a while among the wheat, but he is coming whose fan is in his hand, and who will thoroughly purge his floor. They that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath, (*Psal. xxxv. 5.*) so unable to stand before it, or to escape it, *Isa. xvii. 13.*

2. The doom of the ungodly read, *ver. 5.* (1.) They will be cast, upon their trial, as traitors convicted, *They shall not stand in the judgment*, i. e. They shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be over-ruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, tho' never so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and appear in its own colours, so every man's future state will be by an irreversible sentence determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body; they may hope to come off; nay, to come off with honour, but their hope will deceive them, *they shall not stand in the judgment*; so plain will the evidence be against them, and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it. (2.) They will be for ever shut out from the society of the blessed; they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, i. e. in the judgment, so some, in that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world, those holy myriads, with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, *Jude 14.* *1 Cor. vi. 2.* Or, in heaven, there will shortly be a general assembly of the church of the firstborn, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, *2 Thess. ii. 1.* The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean, or unsanctified, shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves to their everlasting vexation thrust out, *Luke xiii. 27.* The wicked and profane in this world ridiculed the righteous, and their congregation despised them, and cared not for their company, justly therefore will they be for ever separated from them. Hypocrites in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous, and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, tho' his ministers may, the day is coming when he will separate between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat, see *Mark xiii. 41, 49.* That great day, so the Chaldee here calls it, will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division: Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here it is sometimes hard to do, *Mal. iii. 18.*

3. The reason rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked, *ver. 6.* (1.) God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed because the Lord knows their way, he chose them into it, inclined them to choose, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps. (2.) Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. Therefore the ungodly perish, because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk, leads directly to destruction, it naturally tends towards ruin, and therefore must necessarily end in it. Or, we may take it thus, the Lord knows, i. e. he approves of, and is well-pleased with the way of the righteous, and therefore under the influence of his gracious smiles, it shall prosper and end well; but he is angry at the way of the wicked, all they do is offensive to him, and therefore it shall perish, and they in it. It is certain, every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, according as we are or are not accepted of God. Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts, *Jer. xii. 3.* knows their secret devotions, *Matt. vi. 6.* knows their character how much soever it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world to their immortal joy and honour: Let this cast a damp upon the security and jollity of sinners, that their way tho' pleasant now, will perish at last.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us possess ourselves with a holy dread of the wicked man's portion, and deprecate it, with a firm and lively expectation of the judgment to come, and stir up ourselves to prepare for it; and with a holy care to approve ourselves to God in every thing, intreating his favour with our whole hearts.

P S A L M II.

As the foregoing psalm was moral, and shewed us our duty; so this is evangelical, and shews us our Saviour. Under the type of David's kingdom which was of divine appointment, met with much opposition, but prevailed at last, the kingdom of the Messiah the son of David is prophesied of, which is the primary intention and scope of the psalm, and I think there is less in it of the type, and more of the anti-type, than in any of the gospel psalms, for there is nothing in it but what is applicable to Christ, but some things that are not at all applicable to David, ver. 6, 7. Thou art my son, ver. 8. I will give thee the uttermost parts of the earth, and ver. 12. Kiss the Son. It is interpreted of Christ, Acts iv. 25.—xiii. 33. Heb. i. 5. The Holy Ghost here foretells, (1.) The opposition that should be given to the kingdom of the Messiah, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The baffling and chastising of that opposition, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The setting up of the kingdom of Christ, notwithstanding that opposition, ver. 6. (4.) The confirmation and establishment of it, ver. 7. (5.) A promise of the enlargement and success of it, ver. 8, 9. (6.) A call and exhortation to kings and princes to yield themselves the willing subjects of this kingdom, ver. 10, 11, 12. Or thus; We have here, (1.) Threatnings denounced against the adversaries of Christ's kingdom, ver. 1—6. (2.) Promises made to Christ himself the head of this kingdom, ver. 7—9. (3.) Counsel given to all to espouse the interests of this kingdom, ver. 10—12. This psalm, as the former, is very fitly prefixed to this book of devotions, because as it is necessary to our acceptance with God, that we should be subject to the precepts of his law, so it is likewise, that we should be subject to the grace of his gospel, and come to him in the name of a mediator.

1. **W**HY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, 3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. 5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ; hell and heaven contesting it, and the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had an usurped kingdom, and exercised dominion to that degree, that he has been called, the prince of the power of the very air we breathe in, and the god of the world we live in. He knows very well, that as the Messiah's kingdom riseth and gets ground, his falls and loseth ground; and therefore tho' it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely. Observe here,

1. The mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion and all the interests of it, ver. 1, 2, 3. One would have expected that so great a blessing to this world should have been universally welcomed and embraced, and that every sheaf should immediately have bowed to that of the Messiah, and all the crowns and scepters on earth should have been laid at his feet; but it proves quite contrary: Never were the notions of any sect of philosophers, tho' never so absurd, nor the powers of any prince or state, tho' never so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the doctrine and government of Christ. A sign it was from heaven, for the opposition was plainly from hell originally.

1. We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ, and the devil's instruments in this opposition to his kingdom. Princes and people, court and country, have sometimes separate interests; but here they are united against Christ; not the mighty only, but the mob, the heathen, the people, numbers of them, communities of them; tho' usually fond of liberty, yet averse to that liberty Christ came to procure and proclaim. Not the mob only, but the mighty, among whom one might have expected more sense and consideration, appear violent against Christ; tho' his kingdom is not of this world, nor in any danger of weakening their interests, but very likely, if they please to strengthen them; yet the kings of the earth and rulers are up in arms presently. See the effects of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, and how general and malignant the corruption of mankind is. See how formidable the enemies of the church are; they are numerous, they are potent. The unbelieving Jews are here called heathen, so wretchedly were they degenerated from the faith and holiness of their ancestors; they stirred up the heathen, the Gentiles, to persecute the Christians. As the Philistines and their lords, Saul and his

No. xxxviii,

courtiers, the disaffected party and their ring-leaders opposed David's coming to the crown; so Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews, did their utmost against Christ and his interest in men, Acts iv. 27.

2. Who it is that they quarrel with, and muster up all their forces against; it is *against the Lord, and against his anointed*, i. e. against all religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular; and it is certain, all that are enemies to Christ, whatever they pretend, are enemies to God himself, they have *hated both me and my Father*, Joh. xv. 24. The great author of our holy religion, is here called, the Lord's anointed, or Messiah, or Christ, in allusion to the anointing of David to be king; He is both authorized and qualified to be the church's head and king, is duly invested in the office, and every way fitted for it, and yet there are those that are against him; nay, therefore they are against him, because they are impatient of God's authority, envious at his advancement, and have a rooted enmity to the spirit of holiness.

3. The opposition they give, is here described: (1.) It is a most spiteful and malicious opposition. They rage and fret, gnash their teeth for vexation at the setting up of Christ's kingdom; it created them the greatest uneasiness that can be, and fills them with indignation, so that they have no enjoyment of themselves, see Luke xiii. 14. John xi. 47. Acts v. 17, 33.—xix. 28. Idolaters raged at the discovery of their folly, the chief priests and Pharisees at the eclipsing of their glory, and the shaking of their usurped dominion. They that did evil raged at the light. (2.) It is a deliberate politick opposition. They *imagine* or meditate, i. e. they contrive means to suppress the rising interests of Christ's kingdom, and are very confident of the success of their contrivances, they promise themselves that they shall run down religion, and carry the day. (3.) It is a resolute obstinate opposition; they set themselves, set their faces as a flint, and their hearts as an adamant, in defiance of reason and conscience, and all the terrors of the Lord; they are proud and daring, like the Babel builders, and will persist in their resolution come what will. (4.) It is a combined confederate opposition. They take counsel together, to assist and animate one another in this opposition; they are unanimous in their resolutions, and carry them, *nemine contradicente*, that they will push on the unholy war against the Messiah, with the utmost vigour: And thereupon councils are called, cabals are formed, and all their wits are at work to find out ways and means for the preventing of the establishment of Christ's kingdom, Psal. lxxxiii. 5.

4. We are here told what it is they are exasperated at, and what they aim at in this opposition, ver. 3. *Let us break their bands asunder*. They will not be under any government, they are children of Belial that cannot endure the yoke; however not under the government of the Lord and his anointed; they will be content to entertain the notions of the kingdom of God and the Messiah, which will serve them to dispute of, and to support their own dominion with. If the Lord and his anointed will make them rich and great in the world, they will bid them welcome: But if they will restrain their corrupt appetites and passions, regulate and reform their hearts and lives, and bring them under the government of a pure and heavenly religion, truly then, *they will not have this man to reign over them*, Luke xix. 14. Christ has bands and cords for us, they that will be saved by him, must be ruled by him; but they are cords of a man, agreeable to right reason, and bands of love, conducive to our true interest: And yet against those the quarrel is; why do men oppose religion, but because they are impatient of the restraints and obligations of it. They would break asunder the bands of conscience they are under, and the cords of God's commandments by which they are called to tie themselves out from all sin, and to tie themselves up to all duty, they will not receive, but cast them away as far from them as they can.

5. They are here reasoned with concerning it, ver. 1. Why do they do this? (1.) They can shew no good cause for opposing so just, and holy, and gracious a government, which will not interfere with the secular powers, nor introduce any dangerous principles hurtful to kings or provinces; but, on the contrary, if universally received, would bring a heaven upon earth. (2.) They can hope for no good success in opposing so powerful a kingdom, with which they are utterly unable to contend. It is a vain thing; when they have done their worst, Christ will have a church in the world, and that church shall be glorious and triumphant; it is *built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. The moon walks in brightness, tho' the dogs bark at it.

2. The mighty conquest gained over all this threatening opposition. If heaven and earth be the combatants, it is easy to foretell which will be the conqueror: They that make this mighty struggle, are the people of the earth, and the kings of the earth, who being of the earth are earthy; but he whom they contest with, is one that *sits in the heavens*, ver. 4. He is in the heaven, a place of such a vast prospect, that he can oversee them all, and all their projects; and such a vast power that he can overcome them all, and all their attempts; he sits there as one easy and at rest, out of the reach of all their impotent menaces

and attempts. There he sits as judge in all the affairs of the children of men, perfectly secure of the full accomplishment of all his own purposes and designs in spite of all opposition, *Pfal.* xxix. 10. The perfect repose of the Eternal Mind, may be our comfort under all the disquietments of our mind. We are tossed on earth, and in the sea, but he sits in the heavens, where he has prepared his throne for judgment, and therefore,

1. The attempts of Christ's enemies are easily ridiculed. God laughs at them for a company of fools. He hath them and all their attempts in derision, and therefore *the virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised them*, *Isa.* xxxvii. 22. Sinners follies are the just sport of God's infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in his are despicable. Sometimes God is said to awake, and arise, and stir up himself for the vanquishing of his enemies, here he is said to sit still and do it; for the utmost operations of God's omnipotence create no difficulty at all, nor the least disturbance to his eternal rest.

2. They are *justly punished*, ver. 5. Tho' God despiseth them as impotent, yet he doth not therefore wink at them, but is justly displeased with them as impudent and impious, and will make the most daring sinners to know that he is so, and to tremble before him. (1.) Their sin is a provocation to him; he is wroth, he is sorely displeased: We cannot expect that God should be reconciled to us, or well-pleased in us, but in and through the anointed; and therefore if we affront and reject him, we sin against the remedy, and forfeit the benefit of his interposal between us and God. (2.) His anger will be a vexation to them; if he but speak to them in his wrath, even the breath of his mouth will be their confusion, slaughter, and consumption, *Isa.* xi. 6. 2 *Thess.* ii. 8. He speaks and it is done, he speaks in wrath, and sinners are undone: As a word made us, so a word can unmake us again, *Who knows the power of his anger?* The enemies rage, but cannot vex God. God sits still, and yet vexeth them, puts them into a consternation, (as the word is) and brings them to their wit's end: His setting up this kingdom of his Son in spite of them, is the greatest vexation to them that can be. They were vexations to Christ's good subjects; but the day is coming, when vexation shall be recompensed to them.

3. They are certainly defeated, and their counsels turned headlong, ver. 6. *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.* David was advanced to the throne, and became master of the strong hold of Zion, notwithstanding the disturbance given him by the malecontents in his kingdom, and particularly the affronts he received from the garrison of Zion, who taunted him with their blind and their lame, their maimed soldiers, 2 *Sam.* v. 6. And the Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, has all power both in heaven and in earth, and is head over all things to the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of his enemies to hinder his advancement, (1.) Jesus Christ is a king, and is invested by him, who is the fountain of power, with the dignity and authority of a sovereign prince in the kingdom both of providence and grace. (2.) God is pleased to call him his king, because he is appointed by him, and intrusted for him, with the sole administration of government and judgment. He is his king, for he is dear to the Father, and one in whom he is well pleased. (3.) Christ took not this honour to himself, but was called to it, and he that called him owns him, *I have set him*; his commandment, his commission he received from the Father. (4.) Being called to this honour, he was confirmed in it, high places (we say) are slippery places, but Christ being raised, is fixed, *I have set him*, I have settled him. (5.) He is set upon Zion, the hill of God's holiness, a type of the gospel church, for on that the temple was built, for the sake of which the whole mount was called holy. Christ's throne is set up in his church, that is, in the hearts of all believers, and in the societies of them. The evangelical law of Christ is said to go forth from Zion, *Isa.* ii. 3. *Mic.* iv. 2. and therefore that is spoken of as the head-quarters of this general, the royal seat of this prince, in whom the children of men shall be joyful.

We are to sing these verses with an holy exultation, triumphing over all the enemies of Christ's kingdom, not doubting but they will all of them be quickly made his foot-stool; and triumphing in Jesus Christ as the great trustee of power: And we are to pray in firm belief of the assurance here given, Father in heaven, *Thy kingdom come*; let thy Son's kingdom come.

7. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* 8. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

We have heard what the kings of the earth have to say against Christ's kingdom, and have heard it gain-said by him that sits in heaven; let us now hear what the Messiah himself has to say for

his kingdom, to make good his claims, and it is what all the powers on earth cannot gain-say. (1.) The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon a decree, an eternal decree, of God the Father. It was not a sudden resolve, it was not the trial of an experiment, but the result of the counsels of the divine wisdom, and the determinations of the divine will before all worlds, neither of which can be altered. The precept or statute, so some read it; the covenant or compact, so others; the federal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning man's redemption, represented by the covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, *Pfal.* lxxxix. 5. This our Lord Jesus often referred himself to, as that which all along in his undertaking he governed himself by, *This is the will of him that sent me*, *Joh.* vi. 40. *This commandment have I received of my Father*, *Joh.* x. 18.—xiv. 31.

(2.) There is a declaration of that decree, as far as is necessary for the satisfaction of all those who are called and commanded to yield themselves subjects to this king, and to leave them inexcusable who will not have him to reign over them. The decree was secret, it was what the Father said to the Son, when he possessed him in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; but it is declared by a faithful witness, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and came into the world as the prophet of the church, to declare him, *John* i. 18. The Fountain of all being, is without doubt the Fountain of all power; and it is by, from, and under, him, that the Messiah claims, he has his right to rule, from what Jehovah said to him, by whose word all things were made, and are governed. Christ here makes out a twofold title to his kingdom.

1. A title by inheritance, ver. 7. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* This scripture the apostle quotes, *Heb.* i. 5. to prove not only that Christ has a more excellent name than the angels, but that he *obtained it by inheritance*, ver. 4. He is the Son of God, not by adoption, but his begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, *Joh.* i. 14. And the Father owns him, and will have this declared to the world, as the reason why he is constituted king upon the holy hill of Zion; he is therefore unquestionably entitled to, and perfectly qualified for that great trust. He is the Son of God, and therefore of the same nature with the Father, has in him all the fulness of the Godhead, infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. The supreme government of the church is too high an honour, and too hard an undertaking for any meer creature; none can be fit for it, but he who is *one with the Father*, and was *from eternity by him*, as *one brought up with him*, thoroughly apprized of all his counsels, *Prov.* viii. 30. He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to him, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and upon this account we are to receive him as a king; for because *the Father loveth the Son, he hath given all things into his hand*, *Joh.* iii. 35.—v. 20. Being a son, he is heir of all things, and the Father having made the worlds by him, it is easy to infer from thence, that by him also he governs them; for he is the eternal Wisdom, and the eternal Word. If God hath said unto him, *Thou art my Son*, it becomes each of us to say to him, *Thou art my Lord, my sovereign.* Further to satisfy us that his kingdom is well grounded upon his sonship, we are here told what his sonship is grounded on; *this day have I begotten thee*; which refers both to his eternal generation itself, for it is quoted, *Heb.* i. 5. to prove that he is the *brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, ver. 3. and to the evidence and demonstration which was given of it by his resurrection from the dead, for to that also it is expressly applied by the apostle, *Acts* xiii. 33. *He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*: It was by the resurrection from the dead, that sign of the prophet Jonas, which was to be the most convincing of all, that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, *Rom.* i. 4. Christ is said to be the first-begotten and first-born from the dead, *Rev.* i. 5. *Col.* i. 18. And immediately after his resurrection it was that he entred upon the administration of his mediatorial kingdom, it was then that he said, *All power is given unto me*, and to that especially he had an eye, when he taught his disciples to pray, *Thy kingdom come.*

2. A title by agreement, ver. 8, 9. The agreement is in short this; the Son must undertake the office of an intercessor, and upon that condition he shall have the honour and power of an universal monarch, see *Isa.* liii. 12. *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, because he made intercession for the transgressors: He shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both*, *Zech.* vi. 13.

1. The Son must ask. This supposeth his putting himself voluntarily into a state of inferiority to the Father, by taking upon him the human nature; for as God, he was equal in power and glory with the Father, and had nothing to ask. It supposeth the making of a satisfaction, in the virtue of which the intercession must be made, and the paying of a price on which this large demand was to be grounded. See *Joh.* xvii. 4, 5. The Son in asking the heathen for his inheritance, aims not only at his own honour, but at their happiness in him; so that he intercedes for them, ever lives to do so, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

2. The Father will grant more than to the half of the kingdom, even to the kingdom itself. It is here promised him, (1.) That his government shall be universal; he shall have the heathen for his inheritance; not the Jews only, to whose nation the church had been long confined, but the Gentiles also, those in the uttermost parts of the earth, (as this nation of ours) shall be his possession, and he shall have multitudes of willing loyal subjects among them. Baptized christians are the possession of the Lord Jesus, they are to him for a name and a praise, God the Father gives them to him, when by his Spirit and grace he works upon them to submit their necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. This is in part fulfilled; a great part of the Gentile world received the gospel when it was first preached, and Christ's throne was set up there, where Satan's seat had long been: But it is to be yet further accomplished, when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ*, Rev. xi. 15. *Who shall live when God doth this!* (2.) That it shall be victorious, *Thou shalt break them*, i. e. those of them that oppose thy kingdom, *with a rod of iron*, ver. 9. This was in part fulfilled, when the nation of the Jews, those that persisted in unbelief and enmity to Christ's gospel, were destroyed by the Roman power, which was represented, Dan. ii. 40. by feet of iron, as here by a rod of iron. It had a further accomplishment in the destruction of the Pagan powers, when the christian religion came to be established; but it will not be compleatly fulfilled till all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be finally put down, 1 Cor. xv. 24. See Psal. cx. 5, 6. Observe, How powerful Christ is, and how weak the enemies of his kingdom are before him, he hath a rod of iron wherewith to crush them that will not submit to his golden scepter, they are but like a potter's vessel before him, suddenly, easily, and irreparably dashed in pieces by him, see Rev. ii. 27. Thou shalt do it, i. e. thou shalt have leave to do it; nations shall be ruined, rather than the gospel-church shall not be built, and established; *I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee*, Isa. xliii. 4. Thou shalt have power to do it, and none shall be able to stand before thee, and thou shalt do it effectually. They that will not bow shall break.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must give glory to Christ as the eternal Son of God, and our rightful Lord, and must take comfort from this promise, and plead it with God that the kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged, and established, and shall triumph over all opposition.

10. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 22. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

We have here the practical application of this gospel-doctrine, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, by way of exhortation to the kings and judges of the earth. They hear that it is in vain to oppose Christ's government, let them therefore be so wise for themselves as to submit to it. He that has power to destroy them, shews that he has no pleasure in their destruction, for he puts them into a way to make themselves happy, ver. 10. Those that would be wise must be instructed; and those are truly wise that receive instruction from the word of God. Kings and judges stand upon a level with common persons before God; and it is as necessary for them to be religious as for any others. They that give law and judgment to others, must receive it from Christ, and it will be their wisdom. What is said to them is said to all, and is required of every one of us, only it is directed to kings and judges, because of the influence which their example will have upon their inferiors, and because they were men of rank and power that opposed the setting up of Christ's kingdom, ver. 2. We are exhorted,

1. To reverence God, and to stand in awe of him, ver. 11. This is the great duty of natural religion. God is great and infinitely above us, just and holy, and provoked against us, and therefore we ought to fear him and tremble before him, yet he is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve him, our friend and benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him; and these are very well consistent with each other, for (1.) We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him. Even kings themselves, whom others serve and fear, must serve and fear God, there is the same infinite distance between them and God, that there is between the meanest of their subjects and him. (2.) We must rejoice in God, and in subordination to him, we may rejoice in other things, but still with a holy trembling, as those that know what a glorious and jealous God he is, whose eye is always upon us; our salvation must be wrought out *with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. We ought to rejoice in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, but rejoice with trembling, with a holy awe of him, a holy fear for ourselves, lest we come short, and a tender concern for the many precious souls to whom his gospel and kingdom are a favour of death unto death. Whatever we rejoice in in this world, it must always be

with trembling, lest we grow vain in our joy, and be puffed up with the things we rejoice in; and because of the uncertainty of them, and the damp which by a thousand accidents may soon be cast upon our joy. *To rejoice with trembling, is to rejoice as tho' we rejoiced not*, 1 Cor. vii. 29.

2. To welcome Jesus Christ, and to submit to him, ver. 12. This is the great duty of the Christian religion, it is that which is required of all, even kings and judges, and it is our wisdom and interest to do it. Observe here,

1. The command given to this purpose. *Kiss the Son*. Christ is called the Son, because so he was declared, ver. 7. *Thou art my Son*. He is the Son of God by eternal generation, and upon that account he is to be adored by us: He is the *son of man*, i. e. The mediator, Joh. v. 27. and upon that account to be received and submitted to, he is called the Son to include both, as God is often called emphatically the Father, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father, and we must have an eye to him under both considerations. Our duty to Christ is here expressed figuratively, *Kiss the Son*. Not with a betraying kiss, as Judas kissed him, and as all hypocrites who pretend to honour him, but really affront him: But with a believing kiss, (1.) With a kiss of agreement and reconciliation, kiss and be friends, as Jacob and Esau; let the quarrel between us and God be taken up, let the acts of hostility cease, and let us be at peace with God in Christ, who is our peace. (2.) With a kiss of adoration and religious worship; they that worshipped idols kissed them, 1 Kin. xix. 18. *Hof. xiii. 2*. Let us study how to do honour to the Lord Jesus, and to give unto him the glory due unto his name. *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*, Psal. xlv. 11. With him that sits on the throne, we must *worship the Lamb*, Rev. v. 9, 10—13. (3.) With a kiss of affection and sincere love, *Kiss the Son*, i. e. enter into a covenant of friendship with him, and let him be very dear and precious to you, love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did to whom much was forgiven, and in token of it kissed his feet, *Luke vii. 38*. (4.) With a kiss of allegiance and loyalty, as Samuel kissed Saul, 1 Sam. x. 1. Swear fealty and homage to him, submit to his government, take his yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his interest.

2. The reasons to enforce this command, and they are taken from our own interest, which God in his gospel shews a concern for. Consider,

1. The certain ruin we run upon, if we refuse and reject Christ. *Kiss the Son*; for it is at your peril if you do not. (1.) It will be a great provocation to him; do it lest he be angry; the Father is angry already, the Son is the mediator that undertakes to make peace, if we slight him, the *Father's wrath abides upon us*, Joh. iii. 36. and not only so, but there is an addition of the Son's wrath too, to whom nothing is more displeasing than to have the offers of his grace slighted, and the designs of it frustrated. The Son can be angry, tho' a lamb, he is the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the wrath of this king, this King of kings, will be as the roaring of a lion, and will drive even mighty men and chief captains to seek in vain for shelter in rocks and mountains, *Rev. vi. 16*. If the Son be angry, who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifices, no other name by which we can be saved: Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. (2.) It will be utter destruction to your selves, *lest ye perish from the way*, or in the way, so some. In the way of your sins, and from the way of your vain hopes, *lest your way perish*, as *Psal. cxvi.* lest you prove to have missed the way to happiness Christ is the way; take heed lest ye be cut off from him as your way to God. It intimates that they were, or at least thought themselves, in the way, but by neglecting Christ, they perished from it, which aggravates their ruin, that they go to hell from the way to heaven; are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never come thither.

2. The happiness we are sure of, if we yield ourselves to Christ. When his wrath is kindled tho' but a little, the least spark of that fire is enough to make the proudest sinner miserable, if it fasten upon his conscience; for it will burn to the lowest hell, one would think it should therefore follow, when his wrath is kindled, wo be to those that despise him; but the Psalmist startles at the thought, blesteth himself from that dreadful doom, and blesteth those that do escape it. They that trust in him, and so kiss him are truly happy; but they will especially appear to be so, when the wrath of Christ is kindled against others. Blessed will they be in the day of wrath, that by trusting in Christ have made him their refuge and patron; when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they shall lift up their heads with joy; and then those who now despise Christ and his followers, will be forced to say it to their own greater confusion. Now we see that blessed are all they, and they only, that trust in him.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should not only have our hearts filled with an holy awe of God, but born up with a cheerful confidence on Christ, in whose mediation we may comfort and encourage ourselves and one another, *We are the circumcision that rejoice in Christ Jesus*.

P S A L M III.

As the foregoing psalm, in the type of David in preferment, shewed us the royal dignity of the Redeemer; so this, by the example of David in distress, shews us the peace and holy security of the redeemed: How safe they really are, and think themselves to be under the divine protection. David being now driven out from his palace from the royal city, from the holy city by his rebellious son Absalom, (1.) Complains to God of his enemies, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Confides in God, and encourageth himself in him as his God notwithstanding, ver. 3. (3.) Recollects the satisfaction he had in the gracious answers God gave to his prayers, and his experience of his goodness to him, ver. 4, 5. (4.) Triumphs over his fears, ver. 6. And over his enemies, whom he prays against, ver. 7. (5.) Gives God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort of that divine blessing and salvation which are sure to all the people of God, ver. 8. Those speak best of the truths of God, that speak experimentally; so David here speaks of the power and goodness of God, and of the safety and tranquillity of the godly.

¶ A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

1. **L**ORD, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me. 2. Many there be which say of my soul, *There is no help for him in God.* Selah. 3. But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

The title of this psalm and many others, is as a key hung ready at the door to open it, and let us into the entertainments of it; when we know upon what occasion a psalm was penned, we know the better how to expound it. This was composed, or at least the substance of it was meditated and digested, in David's thoughts, and offered up to God then when he fled from Absalom his son, who formed a conspiracy against him, to take away not his crown only but his life: we have the story, 2 Sam. xv, &c. (1.) David was now in great grief, when in his flight he went up the mount of olives he wept greatly, with his head covered, and marching bare-foot, yet then he composed this comfortable psalm. He wept and prayed, wept and sung, wept and believed; this was sowing in tears. Is any afflicted? let him pray; nay, let him sing psalms, let him sing this psalm. Is any afflicted with undutiful disobedient children? So was David, and yet that did not hinder his joy in God, nor put him out of tune for holy songs. (2.) He was now in great danger, the plot against him was laid deep, and the party that sought his ruin was very formidable, and his own son at the head of them; so that his affairs seemed to be at the last extremity, yet then he kept hold of his interest in God, and improved that. Perils and frights should drive us to God, not drive us from him. (3.) He had now a great deal of provocation given him by those from whom he had reason to expect better things; from his son, whom he had been indulgent of; from his subjects, whom he had been so great a blessing to; which he could not but resent, and was enough to break in upon any man's temper; and yet he was so far from any indecent expressions of passion and indignation, that he had calmness enough for those acts of devotion which require the greatest fixedness and freedom of thought. It was a sign his mind was very sedate, that the Spirit came upon him, who chuseth to move upon the still waters. Let no unkindness, no not of a child, or a friend, ever be laid so much at heart as to disfit us for communion with God. (4.) He was now suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah, this was the evil which for that sin God threatened to raise up against him out of his own house, 2 Sam. xii. 11. which no doubt he observed, and took occasion from thence to renew his repentance for it: And yet he did not therefore cast away his confidence in the divine power and goodness, nor despair of succour. Even our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God, or our hope in God. (5.) He seemed cowardly in fleeing from Absalom, and quitting his royal city, before he had had one push for it, and yet by this psalm, it appears he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True christian fortitude consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patient bearing, and patient waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand.

In these three verses he applies himself to God: Whither else should we go but to him, when any thing grieves us or frightens us? David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray, and yet he could find a way open heaven-wards. Wherever we are, we may have access to God, and may draw nigh to him whi-

thersoever we are driven. David in his flight attends his God.

1. With a remonstrance of his distress, ver. 1, 2. He looks round, and doth as it were take a view of his enemies camp, or receive informations of their designs against him, which he brings to God, not to his council-board. Two things he complains of concerning his enemies.

(1.) That they were very many. Lord how are they increased beyond what they were at first, and beyond whatever he thought they would have been. Absalom's faction, like a snow-ball, strangely gathered in its motion. He speaks of it as one amazed, and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged, should almost generally revolt from him, and rebel against him, and choose for their head such a silly, giddy, young fellow as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! And how little fidelity and constancy is to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects as much as ever any king had, and yet now of a sudden he had lost them: As people must not trust too much to princes, Psal. cxlvi. 3. so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ the son of David had many enemies, when a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, Crucify him, Crucify him, how were they then increased that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange, if the stream be against them, and the power that threatens them grow more and more formidable.

(2.) That they were very malicious: They rose up against him, they aimed to trouble him; but that was not all, they said of his soul, there is no help for him in God. That is, (1.) They put a spiteful and invidious construction upon his troubles, as Job's friends did upon his, concluding, that because his servants and subjects forsook him thus, and did not help him, God had deserted him, and abandoned his cause, and he was therefore to be looked on, or rather to be looked off, as an hypocrite, and a wicked man. (2.) They blasphemously reflected upon God as unable to relieve him, his danger is so great, that God himself cannot help him. It is strange, that so great unbelief should be found in any, especially in many in Israel, as to think any party of men too strong for omnipotence to deal with. (3.) They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God, and drive him to despair of relief from him. They have said to my soul, so it may be read, compare Psal. xi. 1.—xlii. 10. This grieved him worst of all, that they have so ill an opinion of him, as to think it possible to take him off from that bottom: Even the temptation was a buffetting to him, a thorn in his flesh, nay, a sword in his bones. Note, A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God, you cannot vex him with any thing so much as if you offer to persuade him, *there is no help for him in God.* David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord, they say, *there is no help for me in thee*; but, Lord, if it be so, I am undone. They say to my soul, *there is no salvation* (for so the word is) *for him in God*; but, Lord, do thou say unto my soul, *I am thy salvation*, Psal. xxxv. 3. and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them. To this complaint he adds Selah, which occurs about seventy times in the book of psalms: Some refer it to the musick with which in David's time the psalms were sung; others to the sense, and that it is a note commanding a solemn pause. Selah, Mark that, or stop there, and consider a little. As here, they say, there is no help for me in God, Selah, Take time for such a thought as this, *Get thee behind me Satan; the Lord rebuke thee!* Away with such a vile suggestion!

2. With a profession of his dependence upon God, ver. 3. An active believer, the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of providence, or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take of him, and the closer will he cleave to him; so here, when his enemies said, *There is no help for him in God*, he cries out with so much the more assurance, *But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me*; let them say what they will, I am sure, thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved, I will never distrust thee. See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him. (1.) Safety, *Thou art a shield for me*, a shield about me, so some, to secure me on all sides since my enemies surrounded me. Not only my shield, Gen. xv. 1. which notes an interest in the divine protection; but a shield for me, which notes the present behaviour and advantage of that protection. (2.) Honour, *Thou art my glory*. Those whom God owns for his, are not only safe and easy, but really look great, and have true honour put upon them, far above that which the great ones of the earth are proud of, David was now in disgrace, the crown was fallen from his head, but he will not think the worse of himself, while he has God for his glory, Isa. lx. 19. *Thou art my glory*, i. e. thy glory I reckon mine, so some; that is it I aim at, and am ambitious of, whatever my lot is, and whatever becomes of my honour, that I may be to my God, for a name and a praise. (3.) Joy and deliverance, *thou art the lifter up of my head*, i. e. Thou wilt lift up my head out of my troubles, and restore me to my dignity again in due time; however, thou wilt lift up my head under my troubles, so that I shall

shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail. If in the worst of times God's people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own it is God that is the lifter up of their head, that gives them both cause to rejoice, and hearts to rejoice.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should possess ourselves with an apprehension of the danger we are in, from the multitude and malice of our spiritual enemies, that seek the ruin of our souls by driving us from our God; and concern ourselves in the distresses and dangers of the church of God, which is every where spoken against, every where fought against, but in reference to both, we should encourage ourselves in our God, who doth own and protect, and will in due time crown his own interest both in the world, and in the hearts of his people.

4. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. 5. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the LORD sustained me. 6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. 7. Arise, O LORD, save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone: thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. 8. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

David having stirred up himself, by the irritations of his enemies to take hold on God, as his God, and so gained comfort enough in looking upward, when if he looked round about him, nothing appeared but what was discouraging; here looks back with pleasing reflections upon the benefit he had found by trusting in God, and looks forward with pleasing expectations of a very bright and happy issue, which would shortly be put to the dark dispensation he was now under.

1. See with what comfort he looks back upon the communion he had had with God, and the communications of his favour to him, either in some former troubles he had been in, and through God's goodness got through, or in this hitherto. David had been in his time exercised with many difficulties, often oppressed and brought very low; but still he had found God all-sufficient.

He now remembered with pleasure,

(1.) That his troubles had always brought him to his knees, and in all his difficulties and dangers he had been enabled to acknowledge God, and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice too: And this will be a comfortable reflection. *I cried unto God with my voice.* That care and grief doth us good and no hurt, which sets us a praying, and engageth us not only to speak to God, but to cry to him, as those that are in earnest. And tho' God understands the language of the heart, when the voice is not heard, 1 Sam. i. 13. and values not the hypocritical prayers of those who *cause their voice to be heard on high*, Isa. lviii. 4. and that is all, it is *vox & præterea nihil*; yet when the earnestness of the voice comes from the fervency of the heart, notice shall be taken of it in the account, that we cried unto God with our voice.

(2.) That he had always found God ready to answer his prayers; still *he heard me out of his holy hill*, from heaven, the high and holy place; from the ark on mount Zion, whence he used to give answers to those that sought to him. David had ordered Zadok to *carry back the ark into the city*, when he was upon his flight from Absalom, 2 Sam. xv. 25. knowing that God was not tied, no not to the ark of his presence, and that notwithstanding the distance of place, he could by faith receive answers of peace from the holy hill; no such thing can fix a gulf between the communications of God's grace towards us, and the operations of his grace in us; between his favour and our faith. The ark of the covenant was in mount Zion, and all the answers to our prayers come from the promises of that covenant; Christ was *set king upon the holy hill of Zion*, Psal. ii. 6. and it is through him, whom the Father hears always, that our prayers are heard.

(3.) That he had always been very safe and very easy under the divine protection, *ver. 5. I laid me down and slept*, composed and quiet, and awaked refreshed, for the Lord sustained me; (1.) This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone, and with our families every morning; many have not where to lay their head, but wander in deserts, or if they have, dare not lie down for fear of the enemy; but we have laid us down in peace: many lay them down and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down and sleep in safety, tho' incapable of doing any thing then for our own preservation; many lie down and sleep, and never wake again, they sleep the sleep of death, as the first-born of the Egyptians; but we lie down, and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another

No. xxxviii.

day, and whence is it, but because the Lord hath sustained us with sleep as with food, we have been safe under his protection; and easy in the arms of his good providence. (2.) It seems here to be meant of the wonderful quietness and calmness of David's spirit in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed; and he was easy: The undutifulness of his son, the disloyalty of his subjects, the treachery of many of his friends, the hazard of his person, the fatigues of his march, and uncertainty of the event, never lost him an hour's sleep, nor gave any disturbance to his repose, for the Lord, by his grace, and the consolations of his Spirit, powerfully sustained him, and made him easy. It is a great mercy when we are in trouble to have our minds stayed upon God; so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment. (3.) Some of the ancients apply it to the resurrection of Christ; in his sufferings he offered up strong cries, and was heard; and therefore tho' he laid him down and slept the sleep of death, yet he awaked the third day, for the Lord sustained him that he should not see corruption.

(4.) That God had many a time broken the power, and restrained the malice of his enemies; had *smitten them upon the cheek-bone*, ver. 7. had silenced them, and spoiled their speaking, blemished them, and put them to shame, smitten them on the cheek reproachfully: had disabled them to do the mischief they intended, for he had broken their teeth. Saul and the Philistines that were sometimes ready to swallow him up, could not effect what they designed. The teeth that are gnashed or sharpened against God's people, shall be broken. And when at any time the power of the church's enemies seems threatening, it is good to remember how oft God has broken it, and we are sure that his arm is not shortened: He can stop their mouths and tie their hands.

2. See with what confidence he looks forward upon the dangers he had yet in prospect. Having put himself under God's protection, and often found the benefit of it.

(1.) His fears were all stilled and silenced, ver. 6. With what a holy bravery doth he bid defiance to the impotent menaces and attempts of his enemies, *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people*, that either in a foreign invasion, or an intestine rebellion, set themselves as it were encamped against me round about. No man less safe; his enemies are numerous, ten thousands; they are spiteful and resolute, they have set themselves against me; nay, they have prevailed far, and seemed to have gained their point, for they are against me round about on every side, thousands against one; and yet no man more secure, I will not be afraid for all this, they cannot hurt me, and therefore they shall not frighten me; whatever prudent methods I take for my own preservation, I will not disquiet myself, distrust my God, nor doubt of a good issue at last. When David, in his flight from Absalom, bid Zadok carry back the ark, he spoke doubtfully of the issue of his present troubles, and concluded like an humble penitent, *Here I am, let him do to me what seemeth him good*, 2 Sam. xv. 26. But now, like a strong believer, he speaks confidently, and has no fear concerning the event. Note, A cheerful resignation to God, is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God.

(2.) His prayers were quickened and encouraged, ver. 7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he therefore prays, *Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God*. Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage our petitions for it: He will for this be enquired of.

(3.) His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies; but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God; and now sees *more with him than against him*, ver. 8. Two great truths he here builds his confidence upon, and fetcheth comfort from. (1.) That *salvation belongeth unto the Lord*, i. e. he has power to save, be the danger never so great; it is his prerogative to save, when all other helps and succours fail: it is his pleasure, it is his property, it is his promise to those that are his, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the Lord. Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenor of the new covenant, are sure of salvation; for he that is their God, is the God of salvation. (2.) That his blessing is upon his people; he not only has power to save them, but he has assured them of his kind and gracious intentions towards them. He has in his word pronounced a blessing upon his people, and we are bound to believe that that blessing doth accordingly rest upon them; tho' there be not the visible effects of it. Hence we may conclude, that God's people, tho' they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, yet are surely blessed of him; who blesteth indeed; and therefore cannot command a blessing.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must own the satisfaction we have had in depending upon God, and committing our selves to him, and encourage ourselves and one another to continue still hoping, and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

P S A L M IV.

David was a preacher, a royal preacher, as well as Solomon; many of his psalms are doctrinal and practical as well as devotional; the greatest part of this psalm is so, in which wisdom cries to men, to the sons of men (as Prov. viii. 4, 5.) to receive instruction. The title doth not tell us, as that of the former did, that it was penned on any particular occasion, nor are we to think that all the psalms were occasional, tho' some were; but that many of them were designed in general for the instruction of the people of God, that attended in the courts of his house, the assisting of their devotions, and the directing of their conversations; such a one I take this psalm to be. Let us not make the prophecy of scripture to be of more private interpretation than needs must, 2 Pet. i. 20. Here, (1.) David begins with a short prayer, ver. 1. And that prayer preacheth. (2.) He directs his speech to the children of men, and (1.) In God's name reproves them for the dishonour they do to God, and the damage they do to their own souls, ver. 2. (2.) He sets before them the happiness of godly people for their encouragement to be religious. (3.) He calls upon them to consider their ways, ver. 4. (3.) He exhorts them to serve God and trust in him, ver. 5. (4.) He gives an account of his own experiences of the grace of God working in him, 1. Enabling him to chuse God's favour for his felicity, ver. 6. 2. Filling his heart with joy therein, ver. 7. 3. Quieting his spirit in the assurance of the divine protection he was under night and day, ver. 8.

¶ To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm of David.

1. **H**EAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress, have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. 2. O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah. 3. But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly, for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him. 4. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. 5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness: and put your trust in the LORD.

The title of the psalm acquaints us, that David having penned it by divine inspiration for the use of the church, delivered it to the chief musician, or master of the song, who (according to the divine appointment of psalmody made in his time, which he was chiefly instrumental in the establishment of) presided in that service. We have a particular account of the constitution, the modelling the several classes of singers, each with a chief, and the share each bore in the work, 1 Chron. xxv. Some prophesied according to the order of the king, ver. 2. Others prophesied with a harp to give thanks, and to praise the Lord, ver. 3. Of others, it is said, they were to lift up to the horn, ver. 5. But of them all, that they were for song in the house of the Lord, ver. 6. and were instructed in the songs of the Lord, ver. 7. To one of the chiefs was this psalm committed to be sung on Neginoth, i. e. on stringed instruments, Hab. iii. 19. which were played on with the hand; with musick of that kind the choristers were to sing this psalm: and it should seem, that then they only sung, not the people; but the New Testament appoints all christians to sing, Eph. v. 19. Col. iii. 16. from whom it is expected that they do it decently, not artfully, and therefore there is not now so much occasion for musical instruments as there was then: the melody is to be made in the heart.

In these verses,

1. David addresseth himself to God, ver. 1. Whether the sons of men, to whom he is about to speak, will hear, or whether they will forbear, he hopes and prays that God will give him a gracious audience, and an answer of peace; Hear me when I call, and accept my adorations, grant my petitions, and judge upon my appeals: Have mercy upon me, and hear me. All the notice God is pleased to take of our prayers, and all the returns he is pleased to make to them, must be ascribed not to our merit, but purely to his mercy. Hear me for thy mercy sake, is our best plea. Two things David here pleads further, (1.) Thou art the God of my righteousness; not only a righteous God thyself, but the author of my righteous dispositions, who hast by thy grace wrought that good that is in me, hast made me a righteous man, therefore hear me, and so own thine own work in me; thou art also the patron of my righteous cause, the protector of my wronged innocency, to whom I commit my way, and whom I trust to bring forth my righteousness as the light. When men condemn us unjustly, this is our comfort, It is God that justifies;

he is the God of a believer's righteousness. (2.) Thou hast formerly enlarged me when I was in distress, enlarged my heart in holy joy and comfort under my distresses, enlarged my condition by bringing me out of my distresses, therefore now, Lord, have mercy upon me, and hear me. The experience we have had of God's goodness to us in enlarging us when we have been in distress, is not only a great encouragement to our faith and hope for the future; but a good plea with God in prayer: Thou hast, wilt thou not? for thou art God and changeest not, thy work is perfect.

2. He addresseth himself to the children of men, for the conviction and conversion of those that are yet strangers to God, and that will not have the Messiah the son of David to reign over them.

1. He endeavours to convince them of the folly of their impiety, ver. 2. O ye sons of men, of great men, so some; men of high degree, understanding it of the partizans of Saul, or Absalom, how long will you oppose me and my government, and continue disaffected to it, under the influence of the false and groundless suggestions of those that wish evil to me. Or, it may be taken more generally, God by the psalmist here reasons with sinners to bring them to repentance. You that go on in the neglect of God and his worship, and in contempt of the kingdom of Christ and his government, consider what you do: (1.) You debase yourselves, for you are sons of men, (the word signifies man as a noble creature) consider the dignity of your nature, and the excellency of those powers of reason with which you are endued, and do not act thus irrationally, and unbecoming yourselves. Let the sons of men consider, and shew themselves men. (2.) You dishonour your Maker, and turn his glory into shame. They may well be taken as God's own words, charging sinners with the wrong they do him in his honour: or, if David's words, it may be understood of God, whom he called his glory, Psal. iii. 3. Idolaters are charged with changing the glory of God into shame, Rom. i. 23. All wilful sinners do so, by disobeying the commands of his law, despising the offers of his grace, and giving that affection and service to the creature which is due to God only. Those that profane God's holy name, that ridicule his word and ordinances, and while they profess to know him, in works deny him, do what in them lies to turn his glory into shame. (3.) You put a cheat upon yourselves, you love vanity, and seek after leasing, or lying, or that which is a lie. You are your selves vain and lying, and you love to be so. Or you set your hearts upon that which will prove at last but vanity and a lie: they that love the world, and seek the things that are beneath, love vanity, and seek lies; that please themselves with the delights of sense, and portion themselves with the wealth of this world, for these will deceive them, and so ruin them. How long will ye do this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, never consider your duty and interest? When shall it once be? Jer. xiii. 27. The God of heaven thinks the time long that sinners persist in dishonouring him, and in deceiving and ruining themselves.

2. He shews them the peculiar favour which God has for good people, the special protection they are under, and the singular privileges to which they are entitled, ver. 3. This comes in here, (1.) As a reason, why they should not oppose or persecute him that is godly, or think to run him down: It is at their peril, if they offend one of these little ones, whom God has set apart for himself, Matth. xviii. 6. God reckons that those who touch them touch the apple of his eye, and he will make their persecutors to know it sooner or later. They have an interest in heaven, God will hear them, and therefore let none dare to do them any injury, for God will hear their cry and plead their cause, Exod. xxii. 23. It is generally supposed that David speaks of his own designation to the throne; he is the godly man whom God hath set apart for that honour, and who doth not usurp it, or assume it to himself; and therefore the opposition you give to him, and to his advancement is very criminal, for therein you fight against God, and it will be vain and ineffectual; God has in like manner set apart the Lord Jesus for himself, that merciful one, and those that attempt to hinder his advancement, will certainly be baffled, for the Father heareth him always. Or, (2.) As a reason why they should themselves be good, and walk no longer in the counsel of the ungodly; you have hitherto sought vanity, be truly religious, and you will be truly happy here and for ever; for, (1.) God will secure to himself his interest in you. The Lord hath set apart him that is godly, every particular godly man for himself, in his eternal choice, in his effectual calling, in the special disposals of his providence and operations of his grace; they are purified unto him a peculiar people. Godly men are God's separated sealed ones; he knows them that are his, hath set his image and superscription upon them; distinguisheth them with uncommon favours, and they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels. Know this; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from him to whom they are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects. (2.) God will secure to you an interest in himself; this David speaks with application, the Lord will hear when I call unto him. We should think ourselves happy if we had the ear of an earthly prince; and is it not worth while upon any terms, especially such easy ones,

to gain the ear of the King of kings: let us know this and forsake lying vanities for our own mercies.

3. He warns them against sin, and exhorts them both to frighten themselves, and to reason themselves from it, ver. 4. *Stand in awe and sin not, (be angry and sin not, so the LXX, and some think the apostles takes that exhortation from him, Eph. iv. 26.) commune with your own hearts.* Be converted, and in order thereunto consider, and fear. Note, 1. We must not sin, nor miss our way, and so miss our aim. 2. One good remedy against sin, is to stand in awe. Be moved, so some in opposition to carelessness and carnal security; always keep up a holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God, and a holy dread of his wrath and curse, and dare not to provoke him. 3. One good means of preventing sin, and preserving a holy awe is to be frequent and serious in *communing with our own hearts, talk with your hearts*; you have a great deal to say to them, they may be spoken with at any time, let it not be unsaid: A thinking man is in a fair way to be a wise and a good man. *Commune with your hearts*, i. e. Examine them by serious self-reflection, that you may acquaint yourselves with them, and amend what is amiss in them: Employ them by solemn pious meditations, let your thoughts fasten upon that which is good, and keep close to it. Consider your ways; and observe the directions here given us, in order to the doing of this work well, and to good purpose. (1.) Chuse a solitary time; do it when you lie awake upon your beds. Before you turn you to go to sleep at night, (as some of the heathen moralists have directed) examine your consciences what you have done that day, particularly what you have done amiss, that you may repent of it. When you awake in the night, meditate upon God, and the things that belong to your peace. David did himself practise what he here counsels others to do, *Pfal. lxxiii. 6. I remember thee on my bed*, upon a sick-bed particularly we should consider our ways, and commune with our own hearts about them. (2.) Compose yourselves into a serious frame; be still. When you have asked conscience a question, be silent, and wait for an answer; even in unquiet times keep your spirits calm and quiet.

4. He counsels them to make conscience of their duty, ver. 5. *Offer to God the sacrifice of righteousness.* We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. They that were disaffected to David and his government, would soon come to a better temper, and return to their allegiance, if they would but worship God aright: and those that know the concerns that lie between them and God, will be glad of the mediator the son of David. It is required here from every one of us, (1.) That we serve him, *offer sacrifices to him*, your own selves first, and your best sacrifices. But they must be *sacrifices of righteousness*, i. e. good works; all the fruits of the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and all the instances of a religious conversation, which are better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Let all your devotions come from an upright heart; let all your alms be sacrifices of righteousness. The sacrifices of the unrighteous, God will not accept, they are an abomination, *Isa. i. 11, &c.* (2.) That we confide in him. First make conscience of offering the sacrifices of righteousness, and then you are welcome to put your trust in the Lord. Serve God without any diffidence of him, or any fear of losing by him. Honour him by trusting in him only, and not in your wealth, or in an arm of flesh; in his providence, and lean not to your own understanding; in his grace, and go not about to establish your own righteousness or sufficiency.

In singing these verses, we must preach to ourselves the doctrine of the provoking nature of sin, the lying vanity of the world, and the unspeakable happiness of God's people, and press upon ourselves the duties of fearing God, conversing with our own hearts, and offering spiritual sacrifices; and in praying over them, beg of God grace, thus to think and thus to do.

6. *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* 7. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* 8. *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou LORD only makest me dwell in safety.*

We have here,

1. The foolish wish of worldly people. *There be many that say, who will shew us any good. Who will make us to see good?* What good they meant is intimated, ver. 7. It was the increase of their corn and wine; all they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world, that they might enjoy abundance of the delights of sense. Thus far they are right, that they are desirous of good, and solicitous about it; but there are these things amiss in this wish, (1.) They enquire in general who will make them happy, but do not apply themselves to God, who alone can, and so expose themselves to be ill-advised, and shew they would rather be beholden to any than to God, for they would willingly live without him. (2.) They enquire for good that may be seen, seeming good,

sensible good, and were not for the good things that are out of sight, and are the objects of faith only. The source of idolatry was a desire of gods that they might see, therefore they worshipped the sun; but as we must be taught to worship an unseen God, so to seek an unseen good, 2 Cor. iv. 18. We look with an eye of faith, further than we can see with an eye of sense. (3.) They enquire for any good; not for the chief good; if it be outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, a good estate, and what are all these worth without a good God, and a good heart? Any good will serve the turn of the most of men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so. This way, this wish of carnal worldlings, is their folly, and yet many there be that join in it; and so will their doom be; *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things*, the penny thou didst agree for.

2. The wise choice which godly people make. David and the pious few that adhered to him, dissented from that wish, and joined in this prayer, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* (1.) He disagrees from the vote of the many; God had set him apart for himself, by distinguishing favours, and therefore he sets himself apart by a distinguishing character. They are for any good, for worldly good, but so am not I, I will not say as they say; any good will not serve my turn; the wealth of the world will never make a portion for my soul, and therefore I cannot take up with it. (2.) He and his friends agree in their choice of God's favour as their felicity, that is it which in their account is better than life, and all the comforts of life.

1. That is it which they most earnestly desire, and seek after; this is the breathing of their souls, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*; most are for other things, but we are for this. Good people, as they are distinguished by their practices, so they are by their prayers, not the length and language of them, but the faith and fervency of them; they whom God hath set apart, have a prayer by themselves, which tho' others may speak the words of, they only offer up in sincerity; and this is a prayer which they all say amen to; Lord, let us have thy favour, and let us know that we have it, and we desire no more, that is enough to make us happy. Lord be at peace with us, accept of us, manifest thyself to us, let us be satisfied of thy loving-kindness, and we will be satisfied with it. Observe, tho' David speaks, ver. 7, 8. of himself only, here in the prayer he speaks for others also, upon us, as Christ taught us to pray, Our Father; all the saints come to the throne of grace on the same errand, and in this they are one, they all desire God's favour as their chief good. We should beg it for others, as well as for ourselves, for in God's favour there is enough for us all, and we shall have never the less for others sharing.

2. That is it in which above any thing they rejoice, ver. 7. *Thou hast hereby many a time put gladness into my heart*, not only supported and refreshed me, but filled me with joy unspeakable, and therefore that is it which I will still pursue, which I will seek after all the days of my life. When God puts grace in the heart, he puts gladness in the heart; nor is any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the divine favour, no, not the joy of harvest, of a plentiful harvest, when the corn and wine increaseth. This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial joy; the mirth of worldly people is but a flash, a shadow, *even in laughter their heart is sorrowful*, Prov. xiv. 13. *Thou hast given gladness in my heart*, so the word is: True joy is God's gift, *not as the world giveth*, John xiv. 27. The saints have no reason to envy carnal worldlings their mirth and joy, but should pity them rather, for they may know better, and will not.

3. That is it which they entirely confide in, and in that confidence are always easy, ver. 8. He had laid him down and slept, *Pfal. iii. 5.* and so he will still, I will lay me down, (having the assurance of thy favour) in peace, and with as much pleasure as they whose corn and wine increaseth, and who lie down as Boaz did in his threshing-floor, at the end of the heap of corn, to sleep there when his heart was merry, *Ruth iii. 7.* *For thou only makest me to dwell in safety.* Tho' I am alone, yet I am not alone, for God is with me; tho' I have no guards to attend me; the Lord alone is sufficient to protect me; he can do it himself when all other defences fail. If he have the light of God's countenance, (1.) He can enjoy himself: His soul returns to God, and reposeth itself in him as its rest, and so he lays him down and sleeps in peace. He has what he would have, and is sure that nothing can come amiss to him. (2.) He fears no disturbance from his enemies, sleeps quiet, and is very secure, because God himself has undertaken to keep him safe. When he comes to sleep the sleep of death, and to lie down in the grave, to make his bed in the darkness, he will then with good old Simeon, *depart in peace*, Luke ii. 29. being assured that God will receive his soul to be safe with himself, and that his body also shall be made to dwell in safety in the grave. (3.) He commits all his affairs to God, and contentedly leaves the issue of them with him. It is said of the husbandman, that having *cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and riseth night and day, and the seed springs and grows up he knoweth not how*, Mark iv. 26, 27. So a good man having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, he sleeps and resteth

resteth night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him, welcome his holy will.

In singing these verses and praying over them, let us with a holy contempt of the wealth and pleasure of this world, as insufficient to make us happy, earnestly seek the favour of God, and pleasingly solace ourselves in that favour; and with a holy indifference about the issue of all our worldly concerns, let us commit ourselves and all our affairs to the conduct and custody of the divine providence, and be satisfied that all shall be made to work for good to us, if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

P S A L M V.

This psalm is a prayer; a solemn address to God, at a time when the psalmist was brought into distress by the malice of his enemies; many such times passed over David, nay there was scarce any time of his life to which this psalm may not be accommodated; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was continually beset with enemies; and his powerful and prevalent appeals to God when he was so beset, pointed at Christ's dependence on his Father, and triumphs over the powers of darkness in the midst of his sufferings. In this psalm, (1.) David settles a correspondence between his soul and God, promising to pray, and promising himself that God would certainly hear him, ver. 1—3. (2.) He gives to God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort of God's holiness, ver. 4—6. (3.) He declares his resolution to keep close to the publick worship of God, ver. 7. (4.) He prayed, 1. For himself that God would guide him, ver. 8. 2. Against his enemies that God would destroy them, ver. 9, 10. 3. For all the people of God, that God would give them joy, and keep them safe, ver. 11, 12. And this is all of great use to direct us in prayer.

¶ To the chief musician upon Nehiloth, a psalm of David.

1. **G**IVE ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. 2. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. 3. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. 4. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

The title of this psalm has nothing in it peculiar, but that it is said to be upon Nehiloth, a word no where else used. It is conjectured (and it is but a conjecture) that it signifies wind-instruments, with which this psalm was sung, as Neginoth was supposed to signify the stringed instruments.

In these verses David had an eye to God,

1. As a prayer-hearing God, and so he has always been, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, and yet is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. Observe how David here styles him, *O Lord*, ver. 1, 3. Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient being, whom we are bound to adore; and my King and my God, ver. 2. whom I have avouched for my God, and to whom I have sworn allegiance; and under whose protection I have put myself as my king. We believe that the God we pray to, is a King and a God, King of kings, and God of gods; but that is not enough, the most commanding encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful prevailing plea in prayer, is to look upon him as our King and our God, whom we lie under peculiar obligations to, and whom we have peculiar expectations from. Now observe,

(1.) What David here prays for, which may encourage our faith and hopes in all our addresses to God. If we pray fervently and in faith, we have reason to hope, (1.) That God will take cognizance of our case, the remonstrance we make of it, and the requests we make upon it, for so he prays here: *Give ear to my words, O Lord*. Tho' God is in heaven, he has an ear open to his peoples prayers, and it is not heavy that he cannot hear. Men perhaps will not or cannot hear us, our enemies so haughty that they will not, our friends at such a distance that they cannot; but God, tho' high, tho' in heaven, can and will. (2.) That he will take it into his wise and compassionate consideration, and will not slight it, or turn it off with a cursory answer, for so he prays, *Consider my meditation*. David's prayers were not his words only, but his meditations; as meditation is the best preparative for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer should go together, *Psal. xix. 14*. And when we thus consider our prayers, then and then only we may expect

that God will consider them, and take that to his heart which comes from ours. (3.) That he will in due time return a gracious answer of peace: for so he prays, ver. 2. *Harken to the voice of my cry*. His prayer was a cry, it was the voice of his cry, which notes fervency of affection, and importunity of expression, and such effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much, and do wonders.

(2.) What David here promiseth, as the condition on his part to be performed, fulfilled, and kept, that he might obtain this gracious acceptance, and this may guide and govern us in our addresses to God, that we may present them aright, for we ask and have not, if we ask amiss.

Four things David here promiseth, and so we must we.

1. That he will pray, that he will make conscience of it, and make a business of it, *unto thee will I pray*. Others live without prayer, but I will pray: kings on their own thrones (so David was) must be beggars at God's throne. Others pray to strange gods, and expect relief from them, but to thee, to thee only, will I pray. The assurances God has given us of his readiness to hear prayer, should confirm our resolution to live and die praying.

2. That he will pray in the morning; his praying voice shall be heard then, and then shall his prayer be directed, that shall be the date of his letters to heaven; not that only, morning and evening, and at noon will I pray, nay, seven times a day will I praise thee; but that certainly morning prayer is our duty; we are the fittest for prayer, when we are in the most fresh and lively, and composed frame, got clear of the slumbers of the night, revived by them, and not yet filled with the business of the day. We have then most need of prayer, considering the dangers and temptations of the day, to which we are exposed, and against which we are concerned by faith and prayer, to fetch in fresh supplies of grace.

3. That he will have his eye single, and his heart intent in the duty; I will direct my prayer, as a marks-man directs his arrow to the white, with such a fixedness and steadiness of mind should we address ourselves to God. Or, as we direct a letter to a friend at such a place, so must we direct our prayers to God as our Father in heaven; and let us always direct them to be left with the Lord Jesus, the great mediator, and then they will be sure not to miscarry. All our prayers must be directed to God, *i. e.* His honour and glory must be aimed at as our highest end in all our prayers; let our first petition be, *Hallowed, glorified be thy name*, and then we may be sure of the same gracious answer to it, that was given to Christ himself, *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*.

4. That he will patiently wait for an answer of peace. I will look up; will look after my prayers, and *hear what God the Lord will speak*, *Psal. lxxxv. 8*. *Hab. ii. 1*. that if he grant what I asked I may be thankful, if he deny, I may be patient, if he defer, I may continue to pray and wait, and may not faint. We must look up or look out, as he that has shot an arrow looks to see how near it has come to the mark: We lose much of the comfort of our prayers, for want of observing the returns of them. Thus praying, thus waiting, as the lame man looked stedfastly on Peter and John, *Acts iii. 4*. we may expect that God will give ear to our words, and consider them, and to him we may refer ourselves, as David here, who doth not pray, Lord, do this or the other for me; but hearken to me, consider my case, and do in it as seemeth good unto thee.

2. As a sin-hating God, ver. 4, 5, 6. David takes notice of this, (1.) As a warning to himself, and all other praying people, to remember, that as the God with whom we have to do is gracious and merciful, so he is pure and holy; tho' he is ready to hear prayer, yet if we regard iniquity in our heart, he will not hear our prayers, *Psal. lxvi. 18*. (2.) As an encouragement to his prayers against his enemies; they were wicked men, and therefore enemies to God, and such as he had no pleasure in. See here, (1.) The holiness of God's nature, when he saith, *Thou art not a God that has pleasure in wickedness*, he means, thou art a God that hatest it, as directly contrary to thine infinite purity and rectitude, and holy will. Tho' the workers of iniquity prosper, let none from thence infer, that God hath pleasure in wickedness; no not in that by which men pretend to honour him, or those do that hate their brethren and cast them out, and say, *let the Lord be glorified*. God has no pleasure in wickedness, tho' palliated with a cloke of religion: Let those therefore who delight in sin, know that God has no delight in them; nor let any say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God is not the author of sin, neither shall evil dwell with him, *i. e.* it shall not always be countenanced and suffered to prosper. Dr Hammond thinks this refers to that law of Moses, which would not permit strangers that persisted in their idolatry, to dwell in the land of Israel.

(2.) The justice of his government: The foolish shall not stand in his sight, *i. e.* shall not be smiled upon by him, nor admitted to attend upon him, nor shall they be acquitted in the judgment of the great day. The workers of iniquity are very foolish: Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools of any others, not fools of God's making, those are to be pitied, he hateth nothing that he has made,

made, but fools of their own making, and those he hates. Wicked people hate God, justly therefore are they hated of him, and it will be their endless misery and ruin; those whom thou hatest, thou shalt destroy, particularly two sorts of sinners, who are here marked for destruction. (1.) Those that are fools; that speak leasing, or lying, and that are deceitful. There is a particular emphasis laid on these sinners, *Rev. xxi. 8. All liars, and chap. xxii. 15. Whosoever loves and makes a lie, nothing more contrary than this, and therefore nothing more hateful to the God of truth.* (2.) Those that are cruel; thou wilt abhor the bloody man; for inhumanity is no less contrary, no less hateful to the God of mercy, whom mercy pleaseth. Liars and murderers are in a particular manner said to resemble the devil, and to be his children, and therefore it may well be expected, that God should abhor them. These were the characters of David's enemies, and such as these are still the enemies of Christ and his church, men perfectly lost to all virtue and honour; and the worse they are, the surer we may be of their ruin in due time.

In singing these verses, and praying them over, we must engage and stir up ourselves to the duty of prayer, and encourage ourselves in it, because we shall not seek the Lord in vain; and must express our detestation of sin, and our awful expectation of that day of Christ's appearing, which will be the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

7. But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. 8. Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. 9. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue. 10. Destroy thou them, O GOD; let them fall by their own counsels: cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee. 11. But let all those that put their trust in thee, rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name, be joyful in thee. 12. For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

In these verses David gives three characters of himself, of his enemies, and of all the people of God, and subjoins a prayer to each of them.

1. He gives an account of himself, and prays for himself, *ver. 7, 8.* (1.) He is steadfastly resolved to keep close to God, and to his worship. Sinners go away from God, and so make themselves odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice, but as for me, that shall not keep me from thee; God's holiness and justice are so far from being a terror to the upright in heart, to drive them from God, that they are rather by them invited to cleave to him. David resolves (1.) To worship God, *i. e.* to pay his homage to him, and give unto God the glory due unto his name. (2.) To worship him publicly; I will come into thy house, the courts of thy house; to worship there with other thy faithful worshippers. David was much in secret worship, prayed often alone by himself, *ver. 2, 3.* and yet was very constant and devout in his attendance on the sanctuary. The duties of the closet are designed to prepare us for, not excuse us from public ordinances. (3.) To worship him reverently, and with a due sense of the infinite distance there is between God and man; *in thy fear will I worship*, with a holy awe of God upon my spirit, *Heb. xii. 28.* God is greatly to be feared by all his worshippers. (4.) To take his encouragement in worship from God himself only. (1.) From his infinite mercy: It is in the multitude of that (the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God, and the innumerable proofs and instances of it which we receive from him) that David confides, and not in any merit or righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy of God should ever be both the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our joy in every thing wherein we have to do with him. (2.) From the instituted medium of worship, which was then the temple, here called the temple of his holiness, as a type of Christ, the great and only mediator, who sanctifies the service, as the temple sanctified the gold, and to whom we must have an eye in all our devotions, as they then had to the temple. (2.) He earnestly prays, that God by his grace would guide and preserve him always in the way of his duty, *ver. 8. Lead me in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies, Hebr. because of those which observe me*, which watch for my halting, and seek occasion against me. See here, (1.) The good use which David made of the malice of his enemies against him; the more curious they were in spying faults in him, that they might have wherewith to accuse him, the more cautious he was to avoid sin, and all appearances of it, and the more solicitous to be always found in the good way of God and duty. Thus by wisdom and grace good

No. XXXIX.

may come out of evil. (2.) The right course which David took for the baffling of those who sought occasion against him: he committed himself to a divine conduct, begged of God both by his providence and by his grace to direct him in the right way, and keep him from turning aside out of it at any time in any instance whatsoever, that the most critical and captious of his enemies, like Daniel's, might find no occasion against him. The way of our duty is here called God's way, and his righteousness, because he prescribes to us by his just and holy laws, which if we sincerely set before us as our rule, we may in faith beg of God to direct us in all particular cases. How this prayer of David's was answered to him, see *1 Sam. xviii. 14, 15.*

2. He gives an account of his enemies, and prays against them, *ver. 9, 10.* (1.) If his account of them be true, as no doubt it is, they have a very bad character; and if they had not been ill men indeed, they could not have been enemies to a man after God's own heart. He had spoken, *ver. 6.* of God's hating the bloody and deceitful men, now, Lord, saith he, that is the character of my enemies: They are deceitful, there is no trusting them, for there is no faithfulness in their mouth: They thought it was no sin to tell such a deliberate lie, if it might but blemish David, and make him odious: *Lord lead me*, saith he, *ver. 8.* for such as these are the men I have to do with, against whose slanders innocency itself is no security. Do they speak fair? Do they talk of peace and friendship? They flatter with their tongues, it is designed to cover their malice, and to gain their point the more secure. Whatever they pretend of religion or friendship, two sacred things, they are true to neither, their inward part is wickedness itself, it is very wickedness. They are likewise bloody, for their throat is an open sepulchre, cruel as the grave, gaping to devour and to swallow up; insatiable as the grave, which never saith, it is enough, *Prov. xxx. 15, 16.* This is quoted, *Rom. iii. 13.* to shew the general corruption of mankind, for they are all naturally prone to malice, *Tit. iii. 3.* The grave is opened for them all, and yet they are as open graves to one another. (2.) If his prayer against them be heard, as no doubt it is, they are in a bad condition. As men are and do, so they must expect to fare. He prays to God to destroy them, according to what he had said, *ver. 6.* Thou shalt destroy men of this character. So let them fall, and sinners would soon throw themselves into ruin, if they be left alone: To cast them out of his protection and favour, out of the heritage of the Lord, out of the land of the living: And wo to those whom God casts out. They have by their sins deserved destruction, there is enough to justify God in their utter rejection, *Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions*, by which they have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are become ripe for ruin: Persecuting God's servants, fills the measure as soon as any thing, *1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.* Nay, they may be easily made to fall by their own counsels; that which they do to secure themselves, and do mischief to others, by the overruling providence of God, may be made a means of their destruction, *Psal. vii. 15.—ix. 17.* He pleads, *They have rebelled against thee*; had they been only mine enemies, I could safely have forgiven them; but they are rebels against God, his crown and dignity, they oppose his government, and will not repent, to give him glory, and therefore I plainly foresee their ruin. His prayer for their destruction comes not from a spirit of revenge, but from a spirit of prophecy, by which he foretold, That all that rebel against God will certainly be destroyed by their own counsels. If it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people, as we are told it is, *2 Thess. i. 6.* we pray it may be done, whenever we pray, *Father, thy will be done.*

3. He gives an account of the people of God, and prays for them, concluding with an assurance of their bliss, which he doubted not of his own interest in. Observe,

(1.) The description he gives of God's people. They are the righteous, *ver. 12.* for they put their trust in God, are well assured of his power and all-sufficiency, venture their all upon his promise, and are confident of his protection in the way of their duty; and they love his name, are well pleased with all that by which God has made himself known, and take delight in their acquaintance with him. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God, and dependence on him.

(2.) His prayer for them: *Let them rejoice*; let them have cause to rejoice, and hearts to rejoice; fill them with joy, with great joy, and unspeakable, let them shout for joy, with constant joy, and perpetual, let them ever shout for joy, with holy joy, and that which terminates in God, *let them be joyful in thee*, in thy favour, in thy salvation; not in any creature. Let them rejoice because thou coverest them, or overshadowest them, dwellest among them. Perhaps, it is an allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was to Israel a visible token of God's special presence with them, and the special protection they were under. Let us learn of David to pray not for ourselves only, but for others; for all good people, for all that trust in God, and love his name, tho' not in every thing of our mind, or in our interest: Let all that are entitled to God's promises, have a share in our prayers: Grace be with all that love Christ in sincerity. This is to concur with God.

(3.) His comfort concerning them, *ver. 12.* Therefore he takes them into his prayers, because they are God's peculiar people; therefore he doubts not but his prayers shall be heard, and they shall always rejoice; for (1.) They are happy in the assurance of God's blessing. *Thou Lord wilt bless the righteous;* wilt command a blessing upon them: Thou hast in thy word pronounced them blessed, and therefore wilt make them truly so: *Those whom thou blessest, they are blessed indeed.* (2.) They are safe under the protection of thy favour; with that thou wilt crown him, so some read it; it is his honour, it will be to him a diadem of beauty, and make him truly great: With that thou wilt compass him, wilt surround him on every side, as with a shield. A shield in war guards only one side, but the favour of God is to the saints a defence on every side; like the hedge about Job, round about, so that while they keep themselves under the divine protection, they are entirely safe, and ought to be entirely satisfied.

In singing these verses, and praying them over, we must by faith put ourselves under God's conduct and care, and then please ourselves with his mercy and grace, and with the prospect of God's triumphs at last over all his enemies, and his peoples triumphs in him and in his salvation.

P S A L M VI.

*David was a weeping prophet as well as Jeremiah, and this psalm is one of his lamentations: Either it was penned at a time, or at least calculated for a time of great trouble both outward and inward. Is any afflicted? Is any sick? Let him sing this psalm. The method of this psalm is very observable, and what we shall often meet with: He begins with doleful complaints, but ends with joyful praises, like Hannah, who went to prayer with a sorrowful spirit, but when she had prayed, went her way, and her countenance was no more sad. Three things the psalmist is here complaining of; (1.) Sickness of body. (2.) Trouble of mind arising from the sense of sin, the meritorious cause of pain and sickness. (3.) The insults of his enemies upon occasion of both. Now here, 1. He pours out his complaints before God, deprecates his wrath, and begs earnestly for the return of his favour, *ver. 1—7.* 2. He assures himself of an answer of peace shortly, to his full satisfaction, *ver. 8—10.* This psalm is like the book of Job.*

¶ To the chief musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith,
A psalm of David.

1. **O** LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am weak: O LORD, heal me, for my bones are vexed. 3. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? 4. Return, O LORD, deliver my soul; oh save me for thy mercies sake. 5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? 6. I am weary with my groaning, all the night make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with my tears. 7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled under humbling providences, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience, and mortify corruption. Those heap up wrath, who cry not when God binds them. But those are getting ready for mercy, who under God's rebukes sow in tears, as David doth here.

Let us observe here,

1. The representation he makes to God of his grievances; he pours out his complaint before him: Whither else should a child go with his complaints but to his father? (1.) He complains of bodily pain and sickness, *ver. 2. My bones are vexed:* His bones and his flesh, like Job's, were touched. Tho' David was a king, yet sick and pained; his imperial crown would not keep his head from aching. Great men are men, and subject to the common calamities of human life. Tho' David was a stout man, a man of war from his youth, yet that will not secure him from distempers, which will soon make even the strong men to bow themselves. Tho' David was a good man, yet neither will his goodness keep him in health; *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* Let this help to reconcile us to pain and sickness, that it has been the lot of some of the best saints, and that we are directed and encouraged by their example to shew before God our trouble

in that case, who is for the body, and takes cognizance of its ailments. (2.) He complains of inward trouble; *My soul is also sore vexed,* and that is much more grievous than the vexation of the bones; *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity,* if that be in good plight, but if that be wounded, the grievance is intolerable. David's sickness brought his sin to his remembrance, and he looked upon it as a token of God's displeasure against him, and that was the vexation of his soul, that made him cry, *I am weak, heal me.* It is a sad thing for a man at the same time to have his bones vexed, and his soul vexed too: But this has been sometimes the lot of God's own people; nay, and this completed this complicated trouble, it was continued upon them a great while, which is here intimated in that exhortation, *ver. 3. Thou, O Lord, how long?* To the living God we must at such a time apply ourselves, who is the only physician both of body and mind, and not to the Assyrians, not to the god of Ekron.

2. The impression which his troubles made upon him. They lay very heavy, he groaned till he was weary, wept till he made his bed to swim, and *watered his couch,* *ver. 6.* wept till he had almost wept his eyes out, *ver. 7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief.* David had more courage and consideration than to mourn thus for any outward affliction: But when sin sat heavy upon his conscience, and he was made to possess his iniquities, when his soul was wounded with the sense of God's wrath, and his withdrawals from him, then he takes on thus, and mourns in secret, and even his soul refuseth to be comforted. This not only kept his eyes waking, but kept his eyes weeping. Note, 1. It has often been the lot of the best men to be men of sorrows, our Lord Jesus himself was so: Our way lies thro' a vale of tears, and we must accommodate ourselves to the temper of the climate.

2. It well becomes the greatest spirits to be tender, and to relent under the tokens of God's displeasure. David that could face Goliath himself, and many another threatening enemy, with an undaunted bravery, yet melts into tears at the remembrance of sin, and under the apprehensions of divine wrath, and it is no diminution at all to his character. 3. True penitents weep in their retirements. The Pharisees disguised their faces, that they might appear unto men to mourn, but David mourns in the night upon his bed where he lay, communing with his own heart, and no eye was a witness to his grief, but His that is all eye. Peter went out, covered his face, and wept. 4. Sorrow for sin ought to be great sorrow; so David's was, he wept so bitterly, so abundantly, that he watered his couch. 5. The triumphs of wicked men in the sorrows of the saints, add very much to their grief. David's eye waxed old because of his enemies, who rejoiced in his afflictions, and put ill constructions upon his tears. In this great sorrow David was a type of Christ, who often wept, and who cried out, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful,* Heb. v. 7.

3. The petitions which he offers up to God in this sorrowful and distressed state. (1.) That which he dreads as the greatest evil, is the anger of God. This was the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery; it was the infusion of this, that made it indeed a bitter cup: And therefore he prays, *ver. 1. O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger,* tho' I have deserved it, *neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* He doth not pray, Lord, rebuke me not, Lord, chasten me not, for as many as God loves, he rebukes and chastens, as a father the son in whom he delighteth. He can bear the rebuke and chastening well enough, if God at the same time lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and by his Spirit make him to hear the joy and gladness of his loving-kindness; the affliction of his body will be tolerable, if he have but comfort in his soul. No matter tho' sickness make his bones ache, if God's wrath do not make his heart ache; therefore his prayer is, *Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath;* let me not lie under the impressions of that, for that will sink me. Herein David was a type of Christ, whose forest complaint in his sufferings was of the trouble of his soul, and of the suspension of his Father's smiles: He never so much as whispered a complaint of the rage of his enemies, why do they crucify me? Or the unkindness of his friends, why do they desert me? But he *cried with a loud voice, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Let us thus deprecate the wrath of God more than any outward trouble whatsoever, and always take heed of treasuring up wrath against a day of affliction. (2.) That which he desires as the greatest good, and which would be to him the restoration of all good, is the favour and grace of God. He prays, 1. That God would pity him, and look upon him with compassion; he thinks himself very miserable, and misery is the proper object of mercy. And therefore he prays, *Have mercy upon me, O Lord,* in wrath remember mercy, and deal not with me in strict justice. 2. That God would pardon his sins; for that is the proper act of mercy, and is often chiefly intended in that petition, *Have mercy upon me.* 3. That God would put forth his power for his relief; *Lord, heal me,* *ver. 2. Save me,* *ver. 4.* Speak the word, and I shall be whole, and all will be well. 4. That he would be at peace with him, *Return, O Lord,* receive me into thy favour again, and be reconciled to me. Thou hast seemed to depart from me and neglect me, nay, to set thyself at a distance, as one angry; but now, Lord, return, and shew thyself nigh to me.

me. (5.) That he would especially preserve the inward man, and the interests of that, whatever becomes of the body, O Lord, deliver my soul from sinning, from sinking, from perishing for ever. It is an unspeakable privilege, that we have a God to go to in our afflictions, and it is our duty to go to him, and thus to wrestle with him; and we shall not seek in vain.

4. The pleas with which he enforceth his petitions; not to move God, he knows our cause, and the true merits of it, better than we can state it; but to move himself. (1.) He pleads his own misery, and that his misery had continued long. I am weak, I am troubled, sore troubled; O Lord, how long shall I be so? (2.) He pleads God's mercy, and from thence we take some of our best encouragements in prayer. *Save me, for thy mercies sake.*

(3.) He pleads God's glory, *ver. 5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee.* Lord, if thou deliver me and comfort me, I will not only give thee thanks for my deliverance, and stir up others to join with me in these thanksgivings; but I will spend the new life thou shalt intrust me with in thy service, to thy glory, and all the remainder of my days preserve a grateful remembrance of thy favours to me, and be quickened thereby in all instances of service to thee: But if I die, I shall be cut short of that opportunity of honouring thee, and doing good to others; for in the grave, who will give thee thanks? Not but that separate souls live and act, and the souls of the faithful joyfully remember God, and give thanks to him: But, (1.) In the second death, (which perhaps David being now troubled in soul under the wrath of God, had some dreadful apprehensions of) there is no pleasing remembrance of God, devils and damned spirits blaspheme him, and do not praise him. Lord, let me not lie always under this everlasting disability to praise thee. They that sincerely seek God's glory, and desire, and delight to praise him, may pray in faith, Lord, send me not to that dreadful place, where there is no devout remembrance of thee, nor any thanks given to thee. (2.) Even the death of the body puts an end to our opportunity and capacity of glorifying God in this world, and serving the interests of his kingdom among men, by opposing the powers of darkness, and bringing many on this earth to know God, and devote themselves to him. Some have maintained, that the joys of saints in heaven are more desirable, infinitely more so, than the comforts of saints on earth; yet the services of saints on earth, especially such eminent ones as David was, are more laudable, and redound more to the glory of the divine grace, than the services of saints in heaven, who are not employed in maintaining the war against sin and Satan, nor in edifying the body of Christ. Courtiers in the royal presence are most happy, but soldiers in the field are more useful; and therefore we may with good reason pray, that if it be the will of God, and he has any farther work for us or our friends to do in this world, he will yet spare us, or them to serve him. To depart and be with Christ, is most happy for the saints themselves; but for them to abide in the flesh, is more profitable for the church: And this David had an eye to when he pleaded this, *In the grave who shall give thee thanks?* Psal. xxx. 9.—lxxxviii. 10.—cxv. 17. Isa. xxxviii. 18. And this Christ had an eye to when he said, *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world.*

We should sing these verses with a deep sense of the terrors of God's wrath, which we should therefore dread and deprecate above any thing; and with thankfulness, if this be not our condition, and compassion to those who are thus afflicted: If we be thus troubled, let it comfort us, that our case is not without precedent, nor, if we humble ourselves and pray as David did, shall it be long without redress.

8. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9. The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer. 10. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

What a sudden change is here for the better! He that was groaning and weeping, and giving up all for gone, *ver. 6, 7.* here looks and speaks very pleasant: Having made his requests known to God, and lodged his case with him, he is very confident the issue will be good, and his sorrow turned into joy.

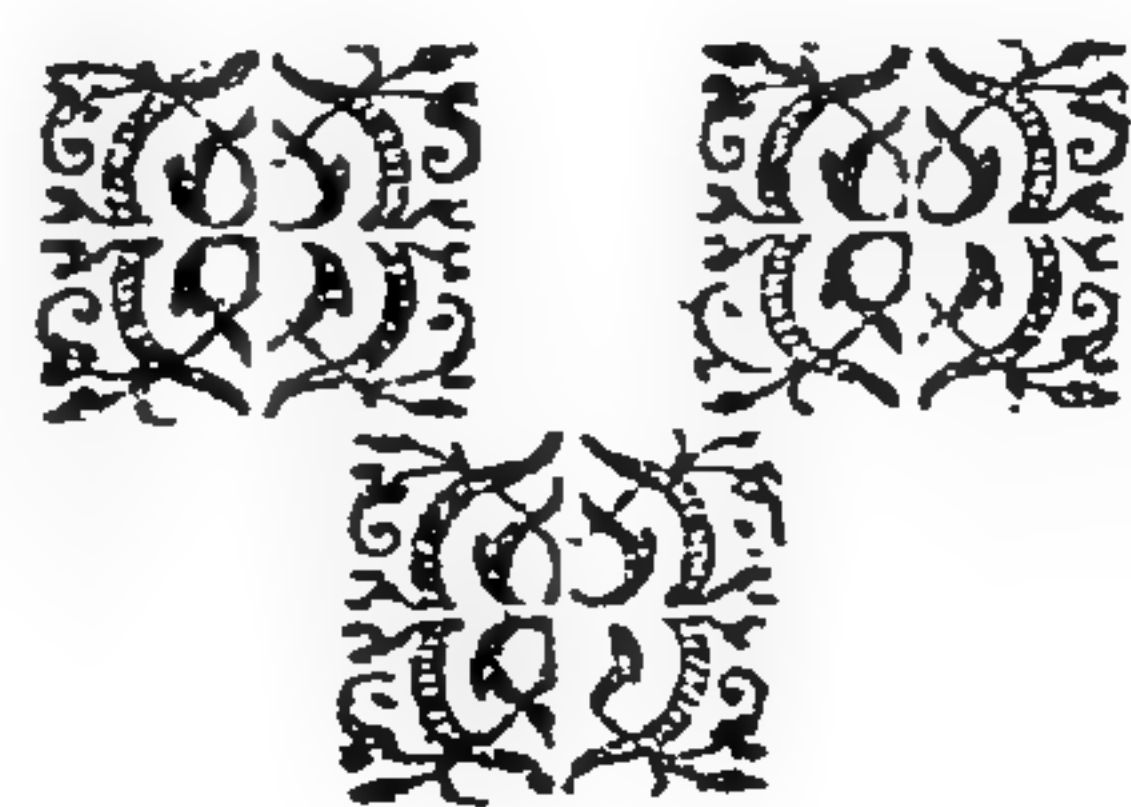
1. He distinguisheth himself from the wicked and ungodly, and fortifies himself against their insults, *ver. 8. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* When he was in the depth of his distress, (1.) He was afraid that God's wrath against him would give him his portion with the workers of iniquity; but now that cloud of melancholy was blown over, he is assured that his soul shall not be gathered with sinners, for they are not his people; he begun to suspect himself to be one of them, because of the heavy pressures of God's wrath upon him; but now

all his fears are silenced, he bids them depart, knowing that his lot is among the chosen. (2.) The workers of iniquity had teased him, and taunted him, and asked him, Where was his God? triumphing in his despondency and despair, but now he had wherewith to answer them that reproached him, for God was about to return in mercy to him, had now comforted his spirit, and would shortly compleat his deliverance. (3.) Perhaps, they had tempted him to do as they did, to quit his religion, and betake himself for ease to the pleasures of sin. But now, depart from me, I will never lend an ear to your counsel, you would have had me to curse God and die; but I will bless him and live. This good use we should make of God's mercies to us, we should thereby have our resolution strengthened never to have any thing more to do with sin and sinners. David was a king, and he takes this occasion to renew his purpose of using his power for the suppression of sin, and the reformation of manners, *Psal. lxxv. 4.—ci. 3.* When God has done great things for us, that should put us upon studying what we shall do for him. Our Lord Jesus seems to borrow these words from the mouth of his father David, when having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity,* Luke xiii. 27. And so teaches us to say so now, *Psal. cxix. 115.*

2. He assures himself that God was, and would be propitious to him, notwithstanding the present intimations of wrath which he was under. 1. He is confident of a gracious answer to this prayer, which he is now making. While he is yet speaking, he is aware that God hears, as *Isa. lxxv. 24. Dan. ix. 20.* and therefore speaks of it as a thing done, and repeats it with an air of triumph, the Lord hath heard, and again, the Lord hath heard: By the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was graciously accepted, and therefore did not doubt but it would in due time be effectually answered. His tears had a voice, a loud voice, in the ears of the God of mercy; and *the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping*; silent tears are not speechless ones: His prayers were cries to God: and *the Lord hath heard the voice of my supplication* has put his fiat to my petitions, and so it will appear shortly. 2. From thence he infers the like favourable audience of all his other prayers, he has heard the voice of my supplication, and therefore he will receive my prayer; for he gives, and doth not upbraid with former grants.

3. He either prays for the conversion, or predicts the destruction of his enemies and persecutors, *ver. 10.* (1.) It may very well be taken as a prayer for their conversion; let them all be ashamed of the opposition they have given me, and the censures they have passed upon me; Let them be (as all true penitents are) vexed at themselves for their own folly; let them return to a better temper and disposition of mind, and let them be ashamed of what they had done against me, and take shame to themselves. (2.) If they be not converted, it is a prediction of their confusion and ruin. They shall be ashamed, and sore vexed, so it may be read, and that justly; they rejoiced that David was vexed, *ver. 2, 3.* and therefore, as usually, it returns upon themselves, they also shall be sore vexed. They that will not give glory to God, shall have their faces filled with everlasting shame.

In singing this, and praying over it, we must give glory to God, as a God ready to hear prayer, must own his goodness to us in hearing our prayers, and must encourage ourselves to wait upon him, and to trust in him in the greatest streights and difficulties.



P S A L M VII.

It appears by the title, that this psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, which was, the malicious imputations that David was unjustly laid under by some of his enemies. Being thus wronged, (1.) He applies himself to God for favour, ver. 1, 2. (2.) He appeals to God concerning his innocency, as to those things whereof he was accused, ver. 3—5. (3.) He prays to God to plead his cause, and judge for him against his persecutors, ver. 6—9: (4.) He expresseth his confidence in God that he would do so, and would return the mischief upon the head of those that designed it against him, ver. 10—16. (5.) He promiseth to give God the glory of his deliverance, ver. 17. In this David was a type of Christ, who was himself, and still is in his members thus injured, but will certainly be righted at last.

¶ Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

1. **O** LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me. 2. Lest he tear my soul like a lion, renting it in pieces, while there is none to deliver. 3. O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands: 4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me: (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy) 5. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it, yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah. 6. Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thy self, because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. 7. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high. 8. The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. 9. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Shiggaion is a song or psalm, the word is used so only here and Hab. iii. 1. A wandering song, so some: the matter and composition of the several parts being different, but artificially put together. A charming song, so others; very delightful; David not only penned it, but sang it himself in a devout religious manner, unto the Lord, concerning the words, or affairs of Cush the Benjamite, i. e. of Saul himself, whose barbarous usage of David, bespoke him rather a Cushite or Ethiopian, than a true-born Israelite. Or more likely, it was some kinsman of Saul named Cush, who was an inveterate enemy to David, misrepresented him to Saul as a traitor, and (which needed not) exasperated Saul against him; one of those children of men, children of Belial indeed, whom David complains of, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. that made mischief between him and Saul. David thus basely abused, has recourse to the Lord: The injuries men do us, should drive us to God, for to him we may commit our cause. Nay, he sings to the Lord, his Spirit was not ruffled by it, nor cast down, but so composed and cheerful, that he was still in tune for sacred songs, and it did not occasion one jarring string in his harp. Thus let the injuries we receive from men, instead of provoking our passions, kindle and excite our devotions. In these verses,

1. He puts himself under God's protection, and flies to him for succour and shelter, ver. 1. *Lord save me*, and deliver me from the power and malice of all them that persecute me, that they may not have their will against me. He pleads, (1.) His relation to God. Thou art my God, and therefore whither else should I go but to thee. Thou art my God, and therefore my shield, Gen. xv. 1. my God, and therefore I am one of thy servants who may expect to be protected. (2.) His confidence in God: Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee, in thee do I put my trust, and not in any arm of flesh. Men of honour will not fail those that repose a trust in them, especially if they themselves have encouraged them to do so; which is our case. (3.) The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in of being

swallowed up by them: Lord, save me, or I am gone; he will tear my soul like a lion tearing his prey, with so much pride, and pleasure, and power, so easily, so cruelly. St Paul compares Nero to a lion, 2 Tim. iv. 17. as David here compares Saul. (4.) The failure of all other helpers; Lord, be thou pleased to deliver me; for otherwise there is none to deliver, ver. 2. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

2. He makes a solemn protestation of his innocency, as to those things whereof he was accused, and by a dreadful imprecation appeals to God, the searcher of hearts concerning it, ver. 3, 4, 5. Observe in general, (1.) When we are falsely accused by men, it is a great comfort if our own consciences acquit us. *Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi*; not only, that they cannot prove their calumnies, Acts xxiv. 13. but that our hearts can disprove them to our own satisfaction. (2.) God is the patron of wronged innocency. David had no court on earth to appeal to; his prince that should have righted him, was his sworn enemy; but he had the court of heaven to fly to, and a righteous Judge there, whom he could call his God. And here see,

1. What the indictment is, which he pleads not guilty to. He was charged with a traitorous design against Saul's crown and life, that he compassed and imagined to depose and murder him, and in order to that levied war against him. This he utterly denies: He never did this, there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand, ver. 3. he abhorred the thought of it. He never rewarded evil to Saul when he was at peace with him, nor to any other, ver. 4. Nay, as some think it should be rendered, he never rendered evil for evil, never did them mischief that had injured him.

2. What evidence he produceth of his innocency: It is hard to prove a negative, and yet this was a negative which David could produce very good proof of, ver. 4. *I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy*: By this it appeared beyond contradiction, that David had no design against Saul's life: That once and again, providence so ordered it, that Saul lay at his mercy, and there were those about him that would soon have dispatched him, but David generously and conscientiously prevented it, when he cuts off his skirt, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. and afterwards, when he took away his spear, 1 Sam. xxvi. 12. to be witnesses for him what he could have done. Saul himself owned both these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity and good affection to him. If we render good for evil, and deny ourselves the gratifications of our passion, it may turn to us for a testimony more than we think of another day.

3. What doom he would submit to if he were guilty, ver. 5. *Let the enemy persecute my soul to the death, and my good name when I am gone, let him lay my honour in the dust*. This intimates, (1.) That if he had been indeed injurious to others, he had reason to expect that they would repay him in the same coin. He that hath his hand against every man, must count upon it that every man's hand will be against him. 2. That in that case, he could not with any confidence go to God, and beg of him to deliver him or plead his cause. It is a presumptuous, dangerous thing for any that are guilty, and suffer justly, to appeal to God, as if they were innocent and suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves, and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and not expect that the righteous God will patronize their unrighteousness. 3. That he was abundantly satisfied in himself concerning his innocency; it is natural to us to wish well to ourselves, and therefore a curse to ourselves if we swear falsely, has been thought as awful a form of swearing as any other; with such an oath or imprecation David here ratifies the protestation of his innocency, which yet will not justify us in doing the like for every light and trivial cause; for the occasion here was important.

3. Having this testimony of his conscience concerning his innocency, he humbly prays to God to appear for him against his persecutors, and breaks every petition with a proper plea, as one that knew how to order his cause before God.

1. He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and pleads their wrath against him. Lord, they are unjustly angry at me, be thou justly angry with them, and let them know that thou art so, ver. 6. *In thine anger lift up thy self* to the seat of judgment, and make thy power and justice conspicuous, because of the rage, the furies, the outrages (the world is plural) of mine enemies. Those need not fear men's wrath against them, who have God's wrath for them. *Who knows the power of his anger?*

2. He prays, that God would plead his cause. Awake for me to judgment, i. e. let my cause have a hearing to the judgment which thou hast commanded, that speaks, (1.) The divine power, as he blesteth effectually, and is therefore said to command the blessing; so he judgeth effectually, and is therefore said to command the judgment, which is such as none can countermand; for it certainly carries execution along with it. (2.) The divine purpose and promise; it is the judgment which thou hast determined to pass upon all the enemies of thy people. Thou hast commanded the princes and judges of the earth to right the injured, and vindicate the oppressed, Lord, awaken thyself to that judgment. He that loves righteousness, and requires it in others, will

will, no doubt, execute it himself. Tho' he seem to connive at wrong as one asleep, he will awake in due time, *Pfal. lxxviii. 65.* and will make it to appear, that the delays were no neglects. He prays, *ver. 7. Return thou on high,* maintain thine own authority, resume thy royal throne which they have despised the sovereignty of, and the judgment-seat, which they have despised the sentence of. Return on high, *i.e.* visibly, and in the sight of all, that it may be universally acknowledged, that heaven itself owns and pleads David's cause. Some make this to point at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, who when he returned to heaven, (returned on high in his exalted state) had all judgment committed to him. Or, it may refer to his second coming, when he shall return on high to this world, to execute judgment upon all: This return his injured people wait for, and pray for, and to it they appeal from the unjust censures of men. He prays again, *ver. 8. Judge me,* judge for me, give sentence on my side.

To enforce this suit, (1.) He pleads that his cause was now brought into the proper court, *The Lord shall judge the people,* *ver. 8.* It is his place; it is his promise, *God is the Judge,* therefore, Lord, judge me. He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he shall do right, and all will be obliged to acquiesce in his judgment. (2.) He insists upon his integrity as to all the matters in variance between him and Saul, and desires no other but to be judged in this matter according to his righteousness, and the sincerity of his heart in all the steps he had taken towards his preferment. (3.) He foretels, that it would be much for the glory of God, and the edification and comfort of his people, if God would appear for him. *So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about,* therefore do it for their sakes, that they may attend thee with their praises and services in the courts of thine house. (1.) They will do it of their own accord. God's appearing on David's behalf, and fulfilling his promise to him, would be such an instance of his righteousness, goodness, and faithfulness, as would greatly enlarge the hearts of all his faithful worshippers, and fill their mouths with praise. David was the darling of his country, especially of all the good people in it; and therefore when they saw him in a fair way to the throne they would greatly rejoice, and give thanks to God, crowds of them would attend his footstool, with their praises for such a blessing to their land. (2.) If David come into power, as God had promised him, he would take care to bring people to church, by his influence upon them, and the ark should not be neglected as it had been in the days of Saul, *1 Chron. xiii. 3.*

3. He prays in general for the conversion of sinners, and the establishment of saints, *ver. 9. O let the wickedness,* not only of my wicked enemies, but of all the wicked, *come to an end, but establish the just.* Here are two things which we every one of us must desire, and may hope for. (1.) The period of sin, that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. When corruption is mortified, when every wicked way and thought is forsaken, and the stream which run violently towards the world, and the flesh is driven back, and runs towards God and heaven, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end; when there is a general reformation of manners, when atheists and profane are convinced and converted, when a stop is put to the spreading of the infection of sin, so that evil men proceed no further, their folly being made manifest; when the wicked designs of the church's enemies are baffled, and their power broken, and the man of sin is destroyed, then the *wickedness of the wicked comes to an end.* And this is that which all that love God, and for his sake hate evil, desire and pray for. (2.) The perpetuity of righteousness, but establish the just. As we pray, that bad may be made good, so we pray, that the good may be made better, that they may not be seduced by the wiles of the wicked, nor shocked by their malice; that they may be confirmed in their choice of the ways of God, and in their resolution to persevere therein; may be firm to the interests of God and religion, and zealous in their endeavours to bring the *wickedness of the wicked to an end.* His plea to enforce this petition, is, for the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins, and therefore the secret wickedness of the wicked he knows, and knows how to bring to an end: and the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to, and has secret ways of establishing.

As far as we have the testimony of an unbiassed conscience for us, that in any instance we are wronged, and injuriously reflected on, we may, in singing these verses, lodge our appeal with the righteous God, and be assured that he will own our righteous cause, and will one day, in the last day at furthest, bring forth our integrity as the light.

10. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. 11. God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. 12. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. 13. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. 14. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 15. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. 16. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. 17. I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

quity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 15. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. 16. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. 17. I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

David having lodged his appeal with God by prayer, and a solemn profession of his integrity in the former part of the psalm, in this latter part doth as it were take out judgment upon the appeal, by faith in the word of God, and the assurance it gives of the happiness and safety of the righteous, and the certain destruction of wicked people, that continue impenitent.

1. David is confident he shall find God his powerful protector and saviour, and the patron of his oppressed innocency, *ver. 10. My defence is of God.* Not only God is my defender, and I shall find him so; but I look for defence and safety in no other; my hope for shelter in a time of danger is placed in God alone: if I have defence, it must be of God. *My shield is upon God,* so some read it; there is that in God which hath an assurance of protection to all that are his. His name is a strong tower, *Prov. xviii. 10.* Two things David builds this confidence upon. (1.) The particular favour God has for all that are sincere. *He saveth the upright in heart,* saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom; saves them out of their present troubles, as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to think themselves so, under the divine protection. (2.) The general respect he has for justice and equity, *God judgeth the righteous,* *i.e.* He owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. God is a righteous Judge, so some read it, who not only doth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men, and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness.

2. He is no less confident of the destruction of all his wicked persecutors, even as many of them as would not *repent to give glory to God.* He reads their doom here, for their good if possible, that they might cease their enmity; or however for his own comfort, that he might not be afraid of them, nor aggrieved at their prosperity and success for a time. He goes into the sanctuary of God, and there understands, 1. That they are children of wrath; they are not to be envied, for God is angry with them, *is angry with the wicked every day.* They are every day doing that which is provoking to him, and he resents it, and treasures it up against the day of wrath. As his mercies are new every morning towards his people, so his anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked, even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days, even in the days of their devotion: for if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their very prayers are an abomination. The wrath of God abides upon them, *John iii. ult.* and continual additions are made to it. 2. They are children of death, as all the children of wrath are; sons of perdition, marked out for ruin. See their destruction.

(1.) God will destroy them: the destruction they are reserved for, is, *destruction from the Almighty,* which ought to be a terror to every one of us, for it comes from the *wrath of God,* *ver. 13, 14.* It is here intimated, (1.) That the destruction may be prevented by the conversion of the sinner, for it is threatened on that condition, if he turn not, from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin: but if he turn, it is implied, that his sin shall be pardoned, and all shall be well. Thus even the threatnings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy, enough to justify God for ever in the destruction of them that perish; they might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die, and their blood is therefore upon their own heads. (2.) That if it be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. In general, *ver. 13. He hath prepared for him the instruments of death,* of all that death which is the wages of sin. If God will slay, he will not want instruments of death, for any creature, even the least and weakest may be made so, when he pleaseth. (1.) Here is variety of instruments, all which breathe threatnings and slaughter. Here is a sword, which wounds and kills at hand, a bow and arrows, which wound and kill at a distance those who think to get out of the reach of God's vindictive justice. If the sinner flees from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through, *Job xx. 24.* (2.) These instruments of death are all said to be made ready, God has them not to seek, but always at hand, *judgments are prepared for scorners; Tophet is prepared of old.* (3.) While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish. (4.) The longer the destruction

destruction is delayed, to give time for repentance, the sinner will it be, and the heavier will it light, and lie for ever, if that time be not so improved while God is waiting, the sword is in the whetting, and the bow in the drawing. (5.) The destruction of impenitent sinners, tho' it come slowly, yet it comes surely; for it is ordained, they are of old ordained to it. (6.) Of all sinners, persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of divine wrath; against them more than any other God has ordained his arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the reach of his judgments.

(2.) They will *destroy themselves*, ver. 14, 15, 16. The sinner is here described taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul, than if directed aright would save: (1.) It is described by the pains of a labouring woman that brings forth a false conception, ver. 14. The sinner's head with its politicks conceives mischief, contrives it with a great deal of art, lays his plot deep, and keeps it close; the sinner's heart with its passions travels with iniquity, and is in pain to be delivered of the malicious projects it is hatching against the people of God. But what doth it come to when it comes to the birth? It is falsehood, it is a cheat upon himself, it is a lie in his right-hand; he cannot compass what he intended; nor if he gain his point, will he gain the satisfaction he promised himself; he brings forth *wind*, Isa. xxvi. 18. *Stubble*, Isa. xxxiii. 11. *Death*, Jam. i. 15. that is, falsehood. (2.) By the pains of a labouring man, that works hard to dig a pit, and then falls into it, and perishes in it. 1. This is true, in a sense, of all sinners, they prepare destruction for themselves, by preparing themselves for destruction; loading themselves with guilt, and submitting themselves to their corruptions. 2. It is often remarkably true of those who contrive mischief against the people of God, or against their neighbours; by the righteous hand of God it is made to *return upon their own heads*, what they designed for the shame and destruction of others, proves to be their own confusion. *Nec lex est justior ulla Quàm necis artifices arte perire sua.* Some apply it to Saul, who fell upon his sword.

In singing this psalm, we must do as David here doth, ver. 17. *praise the Lord according to his righteousness*; i. e. give him the glory of that gracious protection under which he takes his afflicted people, and the just vengeance with which he will pursue them that afflict them; thus we must sing to the praise of the Lord most high, who when his enemies deal proudly, shews that he is above them.

P S A L M VIII.

This psalm is a solemn meditation on, and admiration of, the glory and greatness of God, which we are all concerned to think highly and honourably of. It begins and ends with the same acknowledgment of the transcendent excellency of God's name. It is proposed to be proved, ver. 1. How excellent is thy name in all the earth! And then it is repeated as proved (with a quod erat demonstrandum) in the last verse. For the proof of God's glory, he gives instances of his goodness to man; for God's goodness is his glory. God is to be glorified (1.) For making known himself and his great name to us, ver. 1. (2.) For making use of the weakest of the children of men, by them to serve his own purposes, ver. 2. (3.) For making even the heavenly bodies useful to man, ver. 3, 4. (4.) For making him to have dominion over the creatures in this lower world, and thereby placing him but little lower than the angels, ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. This psalm is in the New Testament applied to Christ and the work of our redemption which he wrought out: the honour given by the children of men to him, compare, ver. 2. with Matth. xxi. 16. and the honour put upon the children of men by him, both in his humiliation when he was made little lower than the angels, and in his exaltation when he was crowned with glory and honour, compare ver. 5, 6. with Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8. 1 Cor. xv. 27. When we are observing the glory of God in the kingdom of nature and providence, we should be led by that, and through that, to the contemplation of his glory in the kingdom of grace.

¶ To the chief musician upon Gittith, A psalm of David.

1. **O** LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. 2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

The psalmist here sets himself to give unto God the glory due unto his name. Dr Hammond grounds a conjecture upon the title of this psalm concerning the occasion of penning it. It is said to be upon Gittith, which is generally taken for the tune, or musical instrument with which this psalm was to be sung; but he renders it, upon the Gittite, i. e. Goliath the Gittite, whom he vanquished and slew, 1 Sam. xvii. and then by him, who was in comparison but a babe and a suckling, was that enemy stilled. The conjecture would be probable enough, but that we find two other psalms with the same title, Psal. lxxxix. and lxxxiv.

Two things David here admires,

1. How plainly God displays his glory himself, ver. 1. He addresses himself to God with all humility and reverence as the Lord, and his peoples Lord. *O Lord, our Lord.* If we believe that God is the Lord, we must avouch and acknowledge him to be ours. He is ours, for he made us, protects us, and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for we are bound to obey him, and submit to him; we must own the relation, not only when we come to pray to God, as a plea with him to shew us mercy, but when we come to praise him, as an argument with ourselves to give him glory: And we shall never think we can do that with affection enough, if we consider,

(1.) How bright God's glory shines even in this lower world: *How excellent is his name in all the earth*: The works of creation and providence evince and proclaim to all the world, that there is an infinite being, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection, the sovereign ruler, powerful protector, and bountiful benefactor of all the creatures. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent, is his name in all the earth. The light of it shines in men's faces every where, Rom. i. 20. if they shut their eyes against it, that is their fault. There is no speech or language, but the voice of God's name either is heard in it, or may be. But this looks further to the gospel of Christ, by which the name of God, as it is notified by divine revelation, which before was great in Israel only, came to be so in all the earth, the utmost ends of which have thus been made to *see God's great salvation*, Mark xvi. 16.

(2.) How much brighter it shines in the upper world: *thou hast set thy glory above the heavens*. (1.) God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest of creatures, and those that shine brightest. (2.) Whereas we on this earth only hear God's excellent name, and praise that, the angels and blessed spirits above see his glory, and praise that, and yet he is exalted far above even their blessing and praise. (3.) In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the right-hand of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, God set his glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers.

2. How powerfully he discovers it by the weakest of his creatures; ver. 2. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength*, or perfected praise, the praise of thy strength, Matth. xxi. 16. This speaks the glory of God, (1.) In the kingdom of nature. The care God takes of little children when they first come into the world, the most helpless of all animals, the special protection they are under, and the provision nature has made for them, ought to be acknowledged by every one of us to the glory of God, as a great instance of his power and goodness, and the more sensibly, because we have all had the benefit of it, for to this we owe it that we *died not from the womb*, that the knees then prevented us, and the breasts that we should suck; this is such an instance of thy goodness, as may for ever put to silence the enemies of thy glory, who say, there is no God. (2.) In the kingdom of providence; in the government of this lower world he makes use of the children of men, some that know him, and others that do not, Isa. xlv. 4. and these such as have been babes and sucklings, nay sometimes he is pleased to serve his own purposes by the ministry of such as are still in wisdom and strength little better than babes and sucklings. (3.) In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Messiah: It is here foretold, that by the apostles, who were looked upon but as babes, *unlearned and ignorant men*, Acts iv. 13. mean and despicable, and by the foolishness of their preaching, the devil's kingdom should be thrown down, as Jericho's walls were by the sound of rams-horns. The gospel is called the arm of the Lord, and the rod of his strength, this was ordained to work wonders; not out of the mouth of philosophers or orators, politicians or statesmen, but of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest external disadvantages that could be; and a specimen was given of this in the childrens crying, *Hosanna, to the Son of David*, when the chief priests and Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him; to that therefore our Saviour applies this, Matth. xxi. 16. and by it stilled the enemy. Sometimes the grace of God appears wonderfully in young children, and he *teacheth them knowledge, and maketh them to understand doctrine*, who are but newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts, Isa. xxviii. 9. Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments, and confounds the noble, wise, and mighty, by the base, and weak, and

and foolish things of the world, that no flesh might glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power may the more evidently appear to be of God and not of man, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. This he doth because of his enemies, because they are insolent and haughty, that he may still them, may put them to silence, and put them to shame, and so be justly avenged on the avengers: see Acts iv. 14.—vi. 10. The devil is the great enemy and avenger, and by the preaching of the gospel he was in a great measure stilled, his oracles were silenced, the advocates of his cause were confounded, and unclean spirits themselves not suffered to speak.

In singing this let us give God the glory of his great name, and the great things he has done by the power of his gospel, in the chariot of which the exalted Redeemer rides forth, conquering and to conquer, and ought to be attended not only with our praises, but with our best wishes; praise is perfected, *i. e.* God is in the highest degree glorified, when strength is ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

3. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; 4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5. For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: 7. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field: 8. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. 9. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

David here goes on to magnify the honour of God by recounting the honours he has put upon man; especially the man Christ Jesus, the condescensions of the divine grace calls for our praises as much as the elevations of the divine glory; how God has condescended in favour to man, the psalmist here observes with wonder and thankfulness, and recommends it to our thoughts. See here,

1. What it is that leads him to admire the condescending favour of God to man; it is his consideration of the lustre and influence of the heavenly bodies, which are within the view of sense, *ver. 3. I consider thy heavens*, and there particularly *the moon and the stars*. But why doth he not take notice of the sun, which much excelleth them all? Probably; because it was in a night-walk by moon-light that he entertained and instructed himself with this meditation, when the sun was not within view but only the moon and the stars, which tho' they are not altogether so serviceable to man as the sun is, yet are no less demonstrations of the wisdom, power; and goodness of the Creator. Observe, (1.) It is our duty to consider the heavens. We see them, we cannot but see them, by this among other things man is distinguished from the beasts, that while they are so framed as to look downwards to the earth, man is made erect to look upward towards heavens, *Os homini sublime dedit, cælumque tueri iussit*, that thus he may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see has not its due influence upon us, unless we consider it. (2.) We must always consider the heavens as God's heavens, not only as all the world is his, even the earth, and the fulness thereof, but in a more peculiar manner, *The heavens, even the heavens are the Lords*, Psal. cxv. 16. they are the place of the residence of his glory, and we are taught to call him Our Father in heaven. (3.) They are therefore his, because they are the work of his fingers, he made them, he made them easily, the stretching out of the heavens, needed not any outstretched arm, it was done with a word, it was but the work of his fingers: He made them with very great curiosity and fineness, like a nice piece of work which the artist makes with his fingers. (4.) Even the lesser lights, the moon and stars, shew the glory and power of the Father of lights, and furnish us with matter for praise. (5.) The heavenly bodies are not only, the creatures of the divine power, but subjects to the divine government; God not only made them but ordained them. And the ordinances of heaven can never be altered. But how doth this come in here to magnify God's favour to man? (1.) When we consider how the glory of God shines in the upper world, we may well wonder he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man: That he who is resident and president over that bright and blessed part of the creation, should humble himself to behold the things done upon this earth, see Psal. cxliii. 5, 6. (2.) When we consider of what great use the heavens are to men on earth, and how the lights of heaven are *divided unto all nations*, Deut. iv. 19. Gen. i. 15. We may well say, *Lord, what is man*, that thou shouldst settle the ordinances of heaven, with an eye to him, and to his benefit, and that his comfort and convenience should be so much consulted in the making of the lights of heaven, and directing their motions!

2. How he expresseth this admiration, *ver. 4. Lord, what is man*, *Enosh*, sinful, weak; miserable man, a creature so forgetful of thee, and his duty to thee, *that thou art thus mindful of him*, that thou takest cognizance of him, and of his actions and affairs, that in the making of the world thou hadst a respect to him; What is the *son of man that thou visitest him*? dost not only feed him and clothe him, protect him and provide for him in common with other creatures, but visitest him, as one friend visits another, art pleased to converse with him, and concern thyself for him! What is man, so mean a creature that he should be thus honoured, so sinful a creature that he should be thus countenanced and favoured! Now this refers,

(1.) To mankind in general; tho' man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, *Job xxv. 6.* yet God puts a respect upon him, and shews him abundance of kindness; man is above all the creatures in this lower world, the favourite and darling of providence. For,

(1.) He is of a very honourable rank of beings. We may be sure he takes place of all the inhabitants of this lower world, for he is made but a *little lower than the angels*, *ver. 5.* lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth, and to the beasts that perish, and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he is so near akin to the holy angels, that he may be truly said to be but a little lower than they, and is in order next to them. He is but for a little while lower than the angels, while his great soul is cooped up in a house of clay, but the children of the resurrection shall be *ισαγγελοι*, *angels peers*, Luke xx. 36. and no longer lower than they.

(2.) He is endued with noble faculties and capacities, *thou hast crowned him with glory and honour*; he that gave him his being has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures; for having *made him wiser than the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven*, *Job xxxv. 11.* He has made him fit to rule them, and it is fit they should be ruled by him. Man's reason is his crown of glory, let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it, nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates.

(3.) He is invested with a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is constituted their Lord. He that made them, and knows them, and whose own they are, has *made man to have dominion over them*, *ver. 6.* His charter by which he holds this royalty bears equal date with his creation, *Gen. i. 28.* and was renewed after the flood, *Gen. ix. 2.* God has put all things under man's feet, that he might serve himself not only of the labour, but of the products and lives of the inferior creatures; they are all delivered into his hand, nay, they are all put under his feet. He instanceth in some of the inferior animals, *ver. 7, 8.* not only sheep and oxen which man takes care of, and provides for; but the beasts of the field, as well as those of the flood, yea, and those creatures which are most at a distance from man; as the fowl of the air, yea, and the fish of the sea, which live in another element; and pass unseen through the paths of the seas. Man has arts to take these; tho' many of them are much stronger; and many of them are much swifter than he, yet one way or other he is too hard for them, *Jam. iii. 7. Every kind of beasts, and birds, and things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed*; he has likewise liberty to use them, as he has occasion; *Rise, Peter, kill and eat*, Acts x. 13. Every dish of fish and fowl that comes to our table is an instance of this dominion man has over the works of God's hands, and it is a reason for our subjection to God our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

(2.) But this refers in a particular manner to Jesus Christ, of him we are taught to expound it; *Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8.* where the apostle to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ, both in heaven and in earth shews, that he is that man, that son of man here spoken of whom God *has crowned with glory and honour*; and made to *have dominion over the works of his hands*. And it is certain, that the greatest favour that ever was shewed to the human race; and the greatest honour that ever was put upon the human nature, was by the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, far beyond the favours and honours done us by creation and providence; tho' those also are great and far more than we deserve.

We have reason humbly to value ourselves by it, and thankfully to admire the grace of God in it.

1. That Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and in that nature humbled himself. He became the son of man, a partaker of flesh and blood; being so, God visited him; which some apply to his sufferings for us, for it is said, *Heb. ii. 9.* by the suffering of death, a visitation in wrath; *he was crowned with glory and honour*. God visited him; *i. e.* having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod, and with stripes; that we by them might be healed. He was for a little while (so the apostle interprets it) made lower than the angels; when he took upon him the form of a servant; and made himself of no reputation.

2. That

2. That in that nature he is exalted to be Lord of all; God the Father exalted him because he had humbled himself; *crowned him with glory and honour*, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were; set him at his own right-hand; constituted him not only the head of the church, but head over all things to the church; and gave all things into his hand, intrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence in conjunction with, and subserviency to, the kingdom of grace. All the creatures are put under his feet, and even in the days of his flesh he gave some specimens of his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute.

With good reason therefore doth the psalmist conclude as he began, *Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth*, which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his gospel, and governed by his wisdom and power. And in singing this, and praying it over, tho' we must not forget to acknowledge with suitable affections God's common favours to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, yet we must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, and submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting till we see all things put under him, and all his enemies made his footstool.

P S A L M IX.

In this psalm, (1.) David praiseth God for pleading his cause, and giving him victory over his enemies, and the enemies of his country, ver. 1—6. and calls upon others to join with him in his songs of praise, ver. 11, 12. (2.) He prays to God that he might have still farther occasion to praise him, for his own deliverances, and the confusion of his enemies, ver. 13, 14, 19, 20. (3.) He triumphs in the assurance he had of God's judging the world, ver. 7, 8. protecting his oppressed people, ver. 9, 10, 18. and bringing his and their implacable enemies to ruin, ver. 15, 16, 17. And this is very applicable to the kingdom of the Messiah, the enemies of which have been in part destroyed already, and shall be yet more and more, till they all be made his footstool, which we are to assure ourselves of, that God may have the glory, and we may take the comfort.

¶ To the chief musician upon Muth-labben,
A Psalm of David.

1. **I** WILL praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart, I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. 2. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. 3. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. 4. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause, thou sattest in the throne judging right. 5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. 6. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities, their memorial is perished with them. 7. But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. 8. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. 9. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. 10. And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

The title of this psalm gives a very uncertain sound concerning the occasion of penning it. It is upon Muth-labben, which some make to refer to the death of Goliath, others to Nabal, others of Absalom; but I incline to think it signifies only some tune or musical instrument to which this psalm was intended to be sung; and that the enemies he is here triumphing in the defeat of are the Philistines, and other the neighbour nations that opposed his settlement in the throne; whom he contested with, and subdued in the beginning of his reign, 2 Sam. v, and viii.

In these verses,

1. David excites and engages himself to praise God for his mercies, and the great things he had of late done for him and his government, ver. 1, 2. Note, (1.) God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous

works. (2.) If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity with our hearts, and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty, with our whole heart. (3.) When we give thanks for some one particular mercy, we should take occasion from thence to remember former mercies, and so to shew forth all his marvellous works. (4.) Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy. *I will be glad and rejoice in thee.* (5.) Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it, and terminate in God only, *I will be glad and rejoice in thee*, not in the gift so much as in the giver. (6.) Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing of psalms. (7.) When God has shewed himself to be above the proud enemies of the church, we must take occasion from thence to give glory to him as the most High. (8.) The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed, see Rev. xii. 10.—xix. 5.—xv. 3, 4.

2. He acknowledges the almighty power of God, as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with, or stand before, ver. 3. But, (1.) They are forced to turn back, their policy and their courage fail them, so that they cannot, they dare not, push forward in their enterprizes, but retire with precipitation. (2.) When once they turn back, they fall and perish, even their retreat will be their ruin, and they will save themselves no more by flying than by fighting; if Haman begin to fall before Mordecai, he is a gone man, and shall prevail no more, see Esth. vi. 13. (3.) The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, is sufficient for the destruction of his and his peoples enemies. That is easily done which a man doth with his very presence; with that God confounds his enemies, such a presence has he. This was fulfilled, when our Lord Jesus with one word, *I am he*, made his enemies to fall back at his presence, John xviii. 6. and at the same time could have made them perish. (4.) When the enemies of God's church are put to confusion, we must ascribe it to the power, not of instruments but of his presence, and give him all the glory.

3. He gives to God the glory of his righteousness, in his appearing on his behalf, ver. 4. *Thou hast maintained my right and my cause*, i. e. my righteous cause, when that came on, thou sattest in the throne judging right. Observe, (1.) God sits in the throne of judgment; to him it belongs to decide controversies, determine appeals, to right the injured, and to punish the injurious, for he hath said, Vengeance is mine. (2.) We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and with him there is no unrighteousness: Far be it from God that he should pervert justice. If there seems to us to be some irregularity in the present decisions of providence; yet those, instead of shaking our belief of God's justice, may seem to strengthen our belief of the judgment to come, which will set all to rights. (3.) Whoever disown and desert a just and injured cause, we may be sure that the righteous God will maintain it, and plead it with jealousy, and will never suffer it to be run down.

4. He records with joy the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell, and attends those triumphs with his praises, ver. 5. By three steps the power and justice of God had proceeded against the heathen and wicked people, that were enemies to the king God had lately set up upon his holy hill of Zion. (1.) He had checked them; *Thou hast rebuked the heathen*, i. e. hast given them real proofs of thy displeasure against them: This he did before he destroyed them, that they might have taken warning by the rebukes of providence, and so have prevented their own destruction. (2.) He had cut them off: *Thou hast destroyed the wicked*. The wicked are marked for destruction, and some are made monuments of God's vindictive justice, and destructive power in this world. (3.) He had buried them in oblivion, and perpetual infamy, had put out their name for ever, that they should never be remembered with any respect.

5. He insults over the enemy, whom God thus appears against, ver. 6. *Thou hast destroyed cities*. Either thou, O enemy, hast destroyed our cities, at least in intention and imagination, or, thou, O God, hast destroyed their cities by the desolation brought upon their country. It may be taken either way, for the psalmist will have the enemy to know, (1.) That their destruction is just; and God was but reckoning with them for all the mischief which they had done and designed against his people. The malicious and vexatious neighbours of Israel, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Syrians, had made incursions upon them, when there was no king in Israel to fight their battles, had destroyed their cities, and done what they could to make their memorial perish with them; but now the wheel was turned upon them, their destructions of Israel were come to a perpetual end, they shall now cease to spoil, and must themselves be spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1. (2.) That it is total and final; such a destruction as should make a perpetual end of them, so that the very memorial of their cities should perish with them. So devouring a thing is time; and much more such desolations do the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been reduced to such ruins, that their very memorial is perished, and those that have sought them could not find where they stood; but

but we look for a city, that has stronger foundations than so.

6. He comforts himself and others in God, and pleaseth himself with the thoughts of him.

1. With the thoughts of his eternity; on this earth we see nothing durable, even strong cities are buried in rubbish, and forgotten, *but the Lord shall endure for ever*, ver. 7. There is no change of his being; his felicity, power, and perfection, are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed, *Psal. xxix. 10.—xciii. 2.*

2. With the thoughts of his sovereignty both in government and judgment. He hath prepared his throne, has fixed it by his infinite wisdom, has fixed it by his immutable counsel; it is the great support and comfort of good people, when the power of the church's enemies is threatening, and the posture of its affairs melancholy and perplexed, that God doth now rule the world, and will shortly judge the world.

3. With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness in all the administrations of his government; he doth all every day, he will do at the last day according to the eternal unalterable rules of equity, ver. 8. *He shall judge the world*, all persons, and all controversies, shall minister judgment to the people, shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state, in righteousness and in uprightness, so that there shall not be the least colour of exception against it.

4. With the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people, and the special protection which he takes them under. The Lord that endures for ever is their everlasting strength and protection; he that judgeth the world will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed, ver. 9. He will be a refuge for the oppressed; a high place, a strong place, for the oppressed in time of trouble. It is the lot of God's people to be oppressed in this world, and to have troublous times appointed to them; perhaps God may not presently appear for them as their deliverer and avenger, but in the midst of their distresses they may by faith fly to him as their refuge, and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them.

5. With the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which they have that make God their refuge, ver. 10. *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee*, as I have done, for the grace of God is the same in all the saints, and then they will find, as I have found, that thou dost not forsake them that seek thee, for the favour of God is the same towards all the saints. Note, 1. The better God is known, the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom, will trust him *further than they can see him*, Job xxxv. 14. To be a God of almighty power, will trust him when creature confidences fail, and they have nothing else to trust to, 2 *Chron. xx. 12.* And to be a God of infinite grace and goodness, will trust him *though he slay them*, Job xiii. 15. Those that know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness, will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, tho' the performance be deferred, and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those that know him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care; and trust in him at all times, even to the end. 2. The more God is trusted, the more he is sought unto. If we trust God, we will seek him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by a constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversation. 3. God never did, nor ever will, disown or desert any that duly seek to him and trust in him. Tho' he afflict them he doth not leave them, he doth not leave them comfortless; tho' he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

11. Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. 12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. 13. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: 14. That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation. 15. The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that they made*: in the net which they hid, is their own foot taken. 16. The LORD is known by the judgment *which* he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion, Selah. 17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. 18. For

the needy shall not alway be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever. 19. Arise, O LORD, let no man prevail, let the heathen be judged in thy sight. 20. Put them in fear, O LORD: *that* the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

In these verses,

1. David having praised God himself, calls upon and invites others to praise him likewise, ver. 11. Those who believe God is greatly to be praised, not only desire to do that work better themselves, but desire that others also may join with them in it, and would gladly be instrumental to bring them to it. *Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion.* As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type: There he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services. In all our praises we should have an eye to God as dwelling in Zion, in a special manner present in the assemblies of his people, as their protector and patron. He resolved himself to shew forth God's marvellous works, ver. 2. and here he called upon others to declare among the people his doings; he commands his own subjects to do it, for the honour of God, of their country, and of their holy religion; he courts his neighbours to do it; to sing praises not as hitherto to their false gods, but to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion, to the God of Israel, and to own among the heathen, that the Lord has *done great things for his people Israel*, *Psal. cxxvi. 3, 4.* Let them particularly take notice of the justice of God in avenging the blood of his people Israel on the Philistines, and other their wicked neighbours, who had, in making war upon them, used them barbarously, and given them no quarter, ver. 12. When God comes to make inquisition for blood by his judgments on earth, before he comes to do it by the judgment of the great day, he remembereth them, remembers every drop of the innocent blood which they have shed, and will return it seven-fold upon the head of the blood-thirsty; he will give them blood to drink for they are worthy. This assurance he might well build upon that word, *Deut. xxxii. 43. He will avenge the blood of his servants.* Note, There is a day coming, when God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and revenge what has been shed unjustly, see *Isa. xxvi. 21. Jer. li. 35.* In that day it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him, *Psal. lxxii. 14.* when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten the cry of the humble, nor the cry of their blood, nor the cry of their prayers, but both are sealed up among his treasures.

2. David having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that God would still appear for him; for he sees not yet all things put under him. He prays (1.) That God would be compassionate to him, ver. 13. *Have mercy upon me*, who having misery only, and not merit to speak for me, must depend upon meer mercy for relief. (2.) That he would be concerned for him; he is not particular in his request, lest he should seem to prescribe to God, but refers himself to the wisdom and will of God in this modest request, Lord, consider my trouble, and do for me as thou thinkest fit. He pleads (1.) The malice of his enemies, the trouble which he suffered of them that hated him; and hatred is a cruel passion. (2.) The experience he had had of divine succours, and the expectation he now had of the continuance of them, as the necessity of his case required, *O thou that liftest me up*, that canst do it, that hast done it, that wilt do it, whose prerogative it is to lift up thy people *from the gates of death.* We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may from thence take encouragement to hope, that in all our distresses he will be a very present help to us. (3.) His sincere purpose to praise God, when his victories should be completed, ver. 14. Lord, save me, not that I may have the comfort and credit of it, but that thou mayst have the glory, *That I may shew forth all thy praise*; and that publicly, *in the gates of the daughter of Zion*, there God was said to dwell, ver. 11. and there David would attend him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the son of David.

3. David by faith foresees, and foretels, the certain ruin of all wicked people both in this world, and in that to come. (1.) In this world, ver. 15, 16. God executeth judgment upon them, when the measure of their iniquities is full, and doth it so, as (1.) To put shame upon them, and make their fall inglorious, for they sink into the pit which they themselves digged, (*Psal. vii. 15.*) they are taken in the net which they themselves laid for the ensnaring of God's people; and they are snared in the work of their own hands. In all the struggles David had with the Philistines, they were the aggressors, 2 *Sam. v. 17, 22.* And other nations were subdued by those wars in which they embroiled themselves. And many times the over-ruling providence of God so orders it,

that their persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by those very projects which they intended to be destructive to the people of God: Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves; and thus mens sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all, that the destruction of sinners, is not only meritoriously, but efficiently of themselves, which will fill them with the utmost confusion. (2.) So as to get honour to himself: *The Lord is known, i. e.* He makes himself known by these judgments which he executeth. It is known there is a God who judgeth in the earth; that he is a righteous God; and one that hates sin, and will punish it: In these the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And therefore the psalmist adds here a note extraordinary, commanding special regard, Higgaion; it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of present judgments, and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations. (2.) In the other world, *ver. 17. The wicked shall be turned into hell*, as captives into the prison-house, even all the nations that forget God. Note, 1. That forgetfulness of God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked. 2. There are nations of those that forget God, multitudes that live without God in the world, many great and many mighty nations who never regard him, nor desire the knowledge of his ways. 3. Hell will at last be the portion of such, a state of everlasting misery and torment. *Sheol*, a pit of destruction, in which they and all their comforts will be for ever lost and buried: Tho' there be nations of them, yet they shall be turned into hell, like sheep into the slaughter-house, *Psal. xlix. 14.* and their being so numerous, will neither be any security or ease to them, nor any loss to God, or the least impeachment of his goodness.

4. David encourageth the people of God to wait for his salvation, tho' it should be long deferred, *ver. 18.* The needy may think themselves, and others may think them forgotten for a while, and their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished, and to have been for ever frustrated; but he that believeth doth not make haste, the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, we may build upon it as undoubtedly true, that God's people, God's elect, shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed of their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them at last, but will make it appear that he never did forget them, it is impossible he should, tho' a woman may forget her sucking child.

5. He concludes with prayer, that God would humble the pride, break the power, and blast the projects, of all the wicked enemies of his church. *Arise, O Lord, ver. 19.* stir up thyself, exert thy power, take thy seat, and deal with all these proud and daring enemies of thy name, and cause, and people: (1.) Lord, restrain them, and set bounds to their malice. *Let not man prevail*, consult thine own honour, and let not weak and mortal men prevail against the kingdom and interest of the almighty and immortal God. *Shall mortal man be too hard for God, too strong for his Maker?* (2.) Lord, reckon with them, *Let the heathen be judged in thy sight*, i. e. let them be plainly called to an account for all the dishonour done to thee, and the mischief done to thy people. Impenitent sinners will be punished in God's sight, and when their day of grace is over, the bowels even of infinite mercy will not relent towards them, *Rev. xiv. 10.* (3.) Lord, frighten them, *ver. 20. Put them in fear, O Lord*; or, strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with thy judgments. God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble, and to flee when none pursues; and thereby he makes them know that they are but men, and own it; they are but weak men, unable to stand before the holy God; sinful men, the guilt of whose conscience makes them subject to frights. Note: It is a very desirable thing, much for the glory of God, and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know and consider themselves to be but men; depending creatures, mutable, mortal, and accountable.

In singing this, we must give to God the glory of his justice, in pleading his peoples cause against his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Sion, even the final destruction of all anti-christian powers and factions, to which many of the antients apply this psalm.



P S A L M X.

The LXX translation joins this psalm with the ninth, and maketh them but one; but the Hebrew makes it a distinct psalm, and the scope and stile is different. In this psalm, (1.) David complains of the wickedness of the wicked, and describes the mighty pitch of impiety to which they were arrived, to the great dishonour of God, and the prejudice of his church and people, and the delay of God's appearing against them, ver. 1—11. (2.) He prays to God to appear against them for the relief of his people, and comforts himself with hopes that he would do so in due time, ver. 12—18.

1. **W**HY standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? 2. The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. 3. For the wicked boasteth of his hearts desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth. 4. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. 5. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. 6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. 7. His mouth is full of cursing, and deceit, and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. 8. He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. 9. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor when he draweth him into his net. 10. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. 11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face, he will never see it.

David in these verses discovers,

1. A very great affection to God and his favour, for in the time of trouble that which he complains of most feelingly, is God's withdrawing his gracious presence, *ver. 1.* *Why standest thou afar off*, as one unconcerned in the indignities done to thy name, and the injuries done to thy people? Note, God's withdrawals are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially in times of trouble. Outward deliverance is afar off, and is hidden from us, and then we think God is afar off, and we therefore want inward comfort; but that it is our own fault, it is because we judge by outward appearance, we stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us.

2. A very great indignation against sin, the sins that made the times perilous, *2 Tim. iii. 1.* He beholds the transgressors, and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report: Not in a way of vain-glory, boasting before God that he was not as *these publicans*, *Luke xviii. 11.* much less venting any personal resentments, piques, or passions, of his own; but as one that laid to heart that which is offensive to God and all good men, and earnestly desired a reformation of manners. Passionate and satyrical invectives against bad men, do more hurt than good; if we will speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer, for he alone can make them better.

This long remonstrance of the wickedness of the wicked, is here summed up in the first words of it, *ver. 2.* *The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor*, where two things are laid to their charge, pride and persecution; the former the cause of the latter; proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion, and acquiesce in their dictates; and those that either eclipse them, or will not yield to them, they malign, and are inveterate in their hatred of them. Tyranny both in state and church owes its original to pride. The psalmist having begun this description, presently inserts a short prayer, a prayer in a parenthesis, which is an advantage, and no prejudice to the sense; *Let them be taken*, as proud people often are, *in the devices that they have imagined*, *ver. 2.* Let their counsel be turned head-long, and let them fall head-long by them.

These two heads of the charge are here enlarged upon.

1. They are proud, very proud, and extremely conceited of themselves; justly therefore did he wonder that God did not speedily appear against them, for he hates pride, and resists the proud.

(1.) The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. He *boasteth of his heart's desire*, brags that he can do what he pleaseth, as if God himself could not control him: and that he hath all as he wished for, and has carried his point. Ephraim said, *I am become rich, I have found me out substance*, Hos. xii. 8. Now, Lord, is it for thy glory to suffer a sinful man thus to pretend to the sovereignty and felicity of a God?

(2.) He proudly contradicts the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; for he *blesteth the covetous, whom the Lord abhors*. See how God and men differ in their sentiments of persons; God abhors covetous worldlings, who make money their God, and idolize it, he looks upon them as his enemies, and will have no communion with them; *The friendship of the world is enmity to God*. But proud persecutors bless them, and approve their sayings, *Psal. xlix. 13*. They applaud them as wise, whom God pronounceth foolish, *Luke xii. 20*. They justify them as innocent, whom God condemns as deeply guilty before him; and they admire them as happy in having their portion in this life, whom God declares upon that account truly miserable; *Thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things*.

(3.) He proudly casts off the thoughts of God, and all dependence upon him, and devotion to him, *ver. 4*. The wicked *through the pride of his countenance*, that pride of his heart which appears in his very countenance, *Prov. vi. 17*. *will not seek after God*, nor entertain the thoughts of him, *God is not in all his thoughts*, i. e. not in any of them. *All his thoughts are, that there is no God*. See here, 1. The nature of impiety and irreligion. It is, *not seeking after God*, and *not having him in our thoughts*. No enquiry after him, *Job xxxv. 10*. *Jer. ii. 6*. no desire towards him, no communion with him, and a secret wish to have no dependence upon him, and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God, i. e. not call upon him, they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but *no eye to God* in any of them, no submission to his will, nor aim at his glory. 2. The cause of this impiety and irreligion; and that is pride. Men will not seek after God, because they think they have no need of him, their own hands are sufficient for them; they think it a thing below them to be religious, because religious people are few, and mean, and despised, and the restraints of religion will be a disparagement to them.

(4.) He proudly makes light of God's commandments and judgments, *ver. 5*. *His ways are always grievous*, i. e. He is very daring and resolute in his sinful courses, he will have his way, tho' never so tiresome to himself and vexatious to others; he travels with pain in his wicked courses, and yet his pride makes him wilful and obstinate in them. God's judgments, i. e. what he commands, and what he threatens for the breach of his commands, are *far above out of his sight*; he is not sensible of his duty by the law of God, nor of his danger by the wrath and curse of God. Tell him of God's authority over him, he turns it off with this, he never saw God, and therefore doth not know that there is a God, he is *in the height of heaven*, and *quæ supra nos nihil ad nos*; tell him of God's judgments which will be executed upon those that go on still in their trespasses, and he will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are *far above out of his sight*, and therefore he thinks they are meer bugbears.

(5.) He proudly despiseth all his enemies, and looks upon them with the utmost disdain; he puffs at them, whom God is preparing to be a scourge and ruin to him, as if he could baffle them all, and was able to make his part good with them. But as it is impolitick to despise an enemy, so it is impious to despise any instrument of God's wrath.

(6.) He proudly sets trouble at defiance, and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity, *ver. 6*. *He hath said in his heart*, and pleased himself with the thought, *I shall not be moved*, my goods are laid up for many years, and *I shall never be in adversity*. Like Babylon that said, *I shall be a lady for ever*, Isa. xlvii. 7. Rev. xviii. 7. Those are nearest ruin who thus set it farthest from them.

2. They are persecutors, cruel persecutors: for the gratifying of their pride, covetousness, and in opposition to God and religion, they are very oppressive to all within their reach. Observe, concerning these persecutors:

1. That they are very bitter and malicious, *ver. 7*. *His mouth is full of cursing*. Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized, and cursed with bell, book, and candle. Where

there is a heart full of malice, there is commonly a mouth full of curses.

2. That they are very false and treacherous. There is mischief designed, but it is hid under the tongue not to be discerned, for the mouth is full of deceit and vanity; he has learned of the devil to deceive, and so to destroy; with this his hatred is covered, *Prov. xxvi. 26*. He cares not what lies he tells, nor what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he useth to compass his ends.

3. That they are very cunning and crafty in carrying on their designs. They have ways and means to concert what they intend, that they may the more effectually accomplish it. Like Esau, that cunning hunter, *he sits in the lurking places, in the secret places*, and his eyes are privily set to do mischief, *ver. 18*. not because he is ashamed of what he doth (if he blushed, there were some hopes he would repent); nor because he is afraid of the wrath of God, for he imagines God will never call him to an account, *ver. 11*. but because he is afraid, lest the discovery of his designs should be the breaking of them. Perhaps it refers particularly to robbers and highwaymen, who lie in wait for honest travellers, to make a prey of them, and what they have.

4. That they are very cruel and barbarous. Their malice is against the innocent, that never provoked them; against the poor, that cannot resist them, and that it will be no glory to them to triumph over. Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honour, against whose mischievous designs neither innocency nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power ought to protect the innocent, and provide for the poor; yet he will be the destroyer of those whose guardian he ought to be. And what do they aim at? It is to *catch the poor*, and *draw them into their net*, i. e. get them into their power, not to strip them only, but to murder them; they hunt for the precious life. They are God's poor people, that they are persecuting, against whom they bear a mortal hatred, for his sake whose they are, and whose image they bear, and therefore they lie in wait to murder them: he lies in wait as a lion that thirsts after blood, and feeds with pleasure upon the prey. The devil, whose agent he is, is compared to a roaring lion that seeks not what, but whom he may devour.

5. That they are base and hypocritical, *ver. 10*. He *coucheth and humbleth himself*, as beasts of prey do, that they may get their prey within their reach. This intimates that the sordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing, tho' never so mean, for the compassing of their wicked designs; witness the scandalous practices of Saul when he hunted David. It intimates likewise, that they cover their malicious designs with the pretence of meekness and humility, and design of kindness to those they design the greatest mischief to, they seem to humble themselves, to take cognizance of the poor, and concern themselves in their concerns, when it is in order to make them fall, to make a prey of them.

6. That they are very impious and atheistical, *ver. 11*. They could not thus break through all the laws of justice and goodness towards man, if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion, and risen up in rebellion against the light of its most sacred and self-evident principles. *He hath said in his heart, God has forgotten*. When his own conscience rebuked him for his wickedness, and threatened him with the consequences of it, and asked, how he would answer it to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth? He turned it off with this, *God has forsaken the earth*, Ezek. viii. 12.—ix. 9. This is a blasphemous reproach, (1.) Upon God's omniscience and providence, as if he could not, or did not see what men do in this lower world. (2.) Upon his holiness, and the rectitude of his nature, as if tho' he did see, yet he did not dislike, but was willing to connive at the most unnatural and inhuman villainies. (3.) Upon his justice and the equity of his government, as if tho' he did see and dislike the wickedness of the wicked, yet he would never reckon with them, nor punish them for it, either because he could not, or durst not, or was not inclined to it. Let those that suffer by proud oppressors, hope that God will in due time appear for them; for those that are abusive to them, are abusive to God Almighty too.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts much affected with a holy indignation at the wickedness of the oppressors, a tender compassion of the miseries of the oppressed, and a pious zeal for the glory and honour of God, with a firm belief that he will in due time right the injured, and reckon with the injurious.

12. Arise, O LORD, O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble. 13. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. 14. Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee,

thee, thou art the helper of the fatherless. 15. Break thou the arm of the wicked, and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none. 16. The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. 17. LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: 18. To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

David here, upon the foregoing remonstrance of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, grounds an address to God: Wherein observe,

1. What he prays for: (1.) That God would himself appear, *ver. 12. Arise, O Lord, O God, lift up thine hand, manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world, Arise, O Lord, to the confusion of those who say, thou hidest thy face.* Manifest thy power, exert it for maintaining of thine own cause, lift up thine hand to give a fatal blow to the oppressors; let thine everlasting arm be made bare. (2.) That he would appear for his people, *forget not the humble, the afflicted, that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit.* Their oppressors in their presumption say, thou hast forgotten them; and they in their despair, are ready to say the same; Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken. (3.) That he would appear against their persecutors, *ver. 15. (1.) That he would disable them to do any further mischief: Break thou the arm of the wicked, i. e. take away his power, that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared, Job xxxiv. 30.* We read of oppressors whose dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged, *Dan. vii. 12.* that they might have time to repent. (2.) That he would deal with them for the mischief they had done: seek out his wickedness; let it all be brought to light, which he thought should for ever lie undiscovered; let it all be brought to account, which he thought should for ever go unpunished, bring it out till thou find none, *i. e. till none of his evil deeds remain unreckoned for, none of his evil designs remain undefeated, and none of his partisans undestroyed.*

2. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions.

1. He pleads the great affronts which these proud oppressors put upon God himself: Lord, it is thine own cause we beg thou wouldst appear in, the enemies have made it so, and therefore it is not for thy glory to let them go unpunished, *ver. 13. Wherefore do the wicked condemn God? He doth so; for he saith, Thou wilt not require it, i. e. Thou wilt never call them to an account for what they do; than which they could not put a greater indignity upon the righteous God.* The psalmist here speaks with admiration, (1.) At the wickedness of the wicked, why do they speak so impiously, why so absurdly? It is a great trouble to good men to think what contempt is cast upon the holy God by the sin of sinners, upon his precepts, his promises, his threatnings, his favours, his judgments, all are despised and made light of. *Wherefore do the wicked thus condemn God? It is because they do not know him.* (2.) At the patience and forbearance of God towards them; why are they suffered thus to condemn God? Why doth he not presently vindicate himself, and take vengeance on them? It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full.

2. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety and iniquity of these oppressors, *ver. 14. Do the persecutors encourage themselves with a groundless fancy, that thou wilt never see it? Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that thou hast seen it, but that thou dost behold it, even all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurks in the hearts of these oppressors, it is all known to thee, and observed by thee; nay, not only thou hast seen it, and dost behold it, but thou wilt requite it, will recompense it into their bosoms, by thy just and avenging hand.*

3. He pleads the dependence which the oppressed had upon him: *The poor committeth himself unto thee, each of them doth so, poor I for one: They rely on thee, as their patron and protector, they refer themselves to thee as their judge, in whose determination they acquiesce, and at whose disposal they are willing to be.* They leave themselves with thee, so some read it; not prescribing, but subscribing, to thy wisdom and will. They thus give thee honour, as much as their oppressors dishonour thee. They are thy willing subjects, and put themselves under thy protection, therefore protect them.

4. He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us. (1.) As a great God, he is *King for ever and ever, ver. 16.* And it is the office of a king to administer justice for the restraint and terror of evil doers, and the protection and praise of them that do well. To whom should the injured subjects appeal

but to the sovereign, *Help, my Lord, O king: Avenge me of mine adversary: Lord, let all that pay homage and tribute to thee as their king, have the benefit of thy government, and find thee their refuge.* Thou art an everlasting King, which no earthly prince is, and therefore canst and wilt by an eternal judgment dispense rewards and punishments in an everlasting state, when time shall be no more; and to that judgment the poor refer themselves. (2.) As a good God; he is the helper of the fatherless, *ver. 14. i. e. of those who have no one else to help them, and have many to injure them.* He has appointed kings to defend the poor and fatherless, *Pfal. lxxxii. 3.* and therefore much more will he do it himself; for he has taken it among the titles of his honour, to be a father to the fatherless, *Pfal. lxviii. 5.* a helper of the helpless.

5. He pleads the experience which God's church and people had had of God's readiness to appear for them. (1.) He had dispersed and extirpated their enemies, *ver. 16. The heathen are perished out of his land, i. e. The remainders of the Canaanites, the seven devoted nations, which have long been as thorns in the eyes, and goads in the sides of Israel, are now at length utterly rooted out, and that is an encouragement to us to hope, that God will in like manner break the arm of the oppressive Israelites, that were in some respects worse than heathens.* (2.) He had heard, and answered their prayers, *ver. 17. Lord, thou hast many a time heard the desire of the humble, and never saidst to a distressed supplicant, seek in vain.* Why may not we hope for the continuance and repetition of the wonders, the favours which our fathers told us of.

6. He pleads their expectations from God, pursuant to their experiences of him: *Thou hast heard, therefore thou wilt cause thine ear to hear, as Psal. vi. 9.* Thou art the same, and thy power, and promise, and relation to thy people the same; and the work and workings of grace are the same in them, and therefore why may we not hope, that he who has been, will still be, will ever be a God hearing prayer. But observe (1.) In what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people, and then gives them an answer of peace; nor may we expect his gracious answer, but in this way; so that God's working upon us, is the best earnest of his working for us. He prepares the heart for prayer, by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts, and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer; he prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for, makes us fit to receive it, and use it well, and then gives it in to us. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it, *Prov. xvi. 1.* and take that as a leading favour. (2.) What he will do in answer to prayer, *ver. 18. (1.) He will plead the cause of the persecuted; will judge the fatherless and oppressed, will judge for them, clear up their innocence, restore their comforts, and recompense them for all the loss and damage they have sustained.* (2.) He will put an end to the fury of the persecutors. Hitherto they shall come, but no further; here shall the proud waves of their malice be stayed; an effectual course shall be taken that the man of the earth may no more oppress. See how light the psalmist now makes of the power of that proud persecutor, whom he had been describing in this psalm, and how slightly he speaks of him, now he had been considering God's sovereignty. (1.) He is but a man of the earth, a man out of the earth, so the word is, sprung out of the earth, and therefore mean and weak, and hastning to the earth again. Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, when he is but *man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass, Isa. li. 12.* He that protects us is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us is but a man of the earth. (2.) God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the word, Satan shall by his instruments no more deceive, *Rev. xx. 3.* no more oppress.

In singing these verses, we must commit religion's just, but injured, cause to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will in due time plead it with jealousy.



P S A L M XI.

In this psalm we have David's struggle with, and triumph over, a strong temptation to distrust God, and betake himself to indirect means for his own safety in a time of danger. It is supposed to have been penned when he began to feel the resentments of Saul's envy, and had had the javelin thrown at him once and again: He was then advised to run his country; no, saith he, I trust in God, and therefore will keep my ground. Observe, (1.) How he represents this temptation, and perhaps parleys with it, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) How he answers it, and puts it to silence with the consideration of God's dominion and providence, ver. 4. His favour to the righteous, and the wrath which the wicked are reserved for, ver. 5, 6, 7. In time of publick fears, when the insults of the church's enemies are daring and threatening, it will be profitable to meditate on this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **I**N the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? 2. For lo, the wicked bend *their* bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string: that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. 3. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Here is, 1. David's fixed resolutions to make God his confidence: *In the Lord put I my trust*, ver. 1. Those that truly fear God and serve him, are welcome to put their trust in him, and shall not be made ashamed of their doing so. And it is the character of the saints, that have taken God for their God, they make him their hope: Even when they have other things to stay themselves upon, yet they do not, they dare not, stay upon them, but on God only; gold is not their hope, nor horses and chariots their confidence, but God only: And therefore when second causes frown, yet their hopes do not fail them, because the first cause is still the same, is ever so. The psalmist, before he gives an account of the temptation he was in to distrust God, records his resolution to trust in him, as that which he was resolved to live and die by.

2. His resentment of a temptation to the contrary: *How say ye to my soul*, which hath thus returned to God as its rest, and reposeth in him, *Flee as a bird to your mountain*, to be safe there out of the reach of the fowler. This may be taken either,

1. As the serious advice of his timorous friends, so many understand it, and with great probability. Some that were hearty well-wishers to David, when they saw how much Saul was exasperated against him, and how maliciously he sought him, pressed him by all means to flee for the same to some place of shelter, and not to depend too much upon the anointing he had received, which they thought was more likely to lose him his head than to save it. That which grieved him in this motion, was not, that to flee would favour of cowardise, and ill become a soldier, but that it would favour of unbelief, and would ill become a saint, who had so often said, *In the Lord put I my trust*. Taking it thus, the two following verses are the reason with which these faint-hearted friends of David backed this advice. They would have him flee, (1.) Because he could not be safe where he was, ver. 2. Look, say they, how the wicked bend their bow, Saul and his instruments aim at thy life, and the uprightness of thine heart will not be thy security. See what an enmity there is in the wicked against the upright, in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, what pains they take, what preparations they make to do them a mischief; they privily shoot at them, or in darkness, that they may not see the evil designed, to avoid it, nor others to prevent it, no, nor God himself to punish it. (2.) Because he could be no longer useful where he was; for, say they, if the foundations be destroyed, as they were by Saul's male-administration, if the civil state and government be unhinged, and all out of course, *Psal. lxxv. 3.—lxxxii. 5.* what canst thou do with thy righteousness to redress the grievances? Alas, it is to no purpose to attempt the saving of a kingdom so wretchedly shattered, whatever the righteous can do signifies nothing; *Abi in cellam, & dic miserere mei, Domine.* Many are thus hindered from doing the service they might do to the publick in difficult times, by a despair of success.

2. It may be taken as a taunt wherewith his enemies bantered him, upbraiding him with the professions he used to make of confidence in God; and scornfully bidding him try what stead that would stand him in now. You say, God is your mountain; flee to him now, and see what the better you will be. Thus they endeavoured to shame the counsel of the poor, saying, there is *no help for them in God*, *Psal. xiv. 6.—iii. 2.* The confidence and comfort which the saints have in God, when all the hopes and joys in the creature fail them, is a riddle to a carnal world, and is ridiculed accordingly.

Taking it thus, the two following verses are David's answer to this sarcasm: In which (1.) He complains of the malice of those who did thus abuse him, ver. 2. *They bend their bow, and make ready their arrows*, and we are told, *Psal. lxiv. 3.* what they are, even bitter words, such words as these, by which they endeavour to discourage their hope in God, which David felt as a sword in his bones. (2.) He resists the temptation with a gracious abhorrence, ver. 3. He looks upon this suggestion, as striking at the foundations which every Israelite builds upon. If you destroy the foundations, if you take good people off from their hope in God, if you can persuade them that their religion is a cheat and a jest, and can banter them out of that, you ruin them, and break their hearts indeed, and make them of all men the most miserable. The principles of religion, are the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built. These we are concerned in interest as well as duty to hold fast against all temptations to infidelity; for if these be destroyed, if we let these go, *What can the righteous do?* Good people would be undone, if they had not a God to go to, a God to trust to, and a future bliss to hope for.

4. The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORDs throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eye-lids try the children of men. 5. The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. 6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup. 7. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.

The shaking of a tree (they say) makes it take the deeper and faster root: The attempt of David's enemies to discourage his confidence in God, engageth him to cleave so much the closer to his first principles, and to review them, which he here doth abundantly to his own satisfaction, and the silencing of all temptations to infidelity. That which was shocking to his faith, and has been so to the faith of many, was the prosperity of wicked people in their wicked ways; and the straits and distresses which the best men are sometimes reduced to, from hence such an evil thought as this was apt to arise, *Surely it is vain to praise God*; and we may call the proud happy: But to stifle and shame all such thoughts, we are here called to consider,

1. That there is a God, a God in heaven, the Lord is in his holy temple above, where, tho' he is out of our sight, yet we are not out of his. Let not the enemies of the saints insult over them, as if they were at a loss, and at their wit's end: No, they have a God, and they know where to find him, and how to direct their prayer unto him, as their Father in heaven. Or, He is in his holy temple, *i. e.* in his church; he is a God in covenant and communion with his people, through a Mediator, of whom the temple was a type. We need not say, Who shall go up to heaven to fetch us from thence a God to trust to? No, the word is nigh us, and God in the word: His Spirit in his saints, those living temples, and the Lord is that Spirit.

2. That this God governs the world; the Lord has not only his residence but his throne in heaven, and he has *set the dominion thereof in the earth*, *Job xxxviii. 33.* for having *prepared his throne in the heavens, his kingdom ruleth over all*, *Psal. ciii. 17.* Hence the heavens are said to rule, *Dan. iv. 26.* Let us by faith see God on his throne, on his throne of glory, infinitely transcending the splendor and majesty of earthly princes; on his throne of government, giving law, giving motion, and giving aim to all the creatures; on his throne of judgment, rendering to every man according to his works; and on his throne of grace, to which his people may come boldly for mercy and grace; and we shall see no reason to be discouraged by the pride and power of oppressors, or any of the afflictions that attend the righteous.

3. That this God perfectly knows every man's true character: *His eyes behold, his eye-lids try the children of men*; he not only sees them, but he sees through them, not only knows all they say and do, but knows what they think, what they design, and how they really stand affected, whatever they pretend. We may know what men seem to be, but he knows what they are, as the refiner knows what the value of the gold is, when he has tried it.

God is said to try with his eyes and his eye-lids, because he knows men, not as earthly princes know men by report and representation, but by his own strict inspection, which cannot err or be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men that we think we have tried, that God's judgment of men we are sure is according to truth.

4. That if he afflict good people, it is for their trial, and therefore it is for their good, *ver. 5.* The Lord tries all the children of men; that he may do them justice, but he tries the righteous, that he may *do them good in their latter end*, Deut. viii. 16. Let not that therefore shake our foundations, or discourage our hope and trust in God.

5. That however persecutors and oppressors may prosper and prevail a while, they now lie under, and will for ever perish under, the wrath of God.

(1.) He is a holy God, and therefore hates them, and cannot endure to look upon them, *the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth*, for nothing is more contrary to the rectitude and goodness of his nature. Their prosperity is so far from being an evidence of God's love, that their abuse of it doth certainly make them the objects of his hatred. He that hates nothing that he has made, yet hates those who have thus ill-made themselves. Dr Hammond offers another reading of this verse; *The Lord trieth the righteous and the wicked, (i. e. distinguisheth infallibly between them, which is more than we can do) and he that loveth violence, hateth his own soul, i. e. persecutors bring certain ruin upon themselves, Prov. viii. 36. as follows here.*

(2.) He is a righteous judge, and therefore he will punish them, *ver. 6.* Their punishment will be, (1.) Inevitable. *Upon the wicked he shall rain snares.* Here is a double metaphor to speak the unavoidableness of the punishment of wicked men. It shall be rained upon them from heaven, *Job xx. 23.* against which there is no fence, and from which there is no escape, see *Job. x. 11. 1 Sam. ii. 10.* It shall surprize them, as a sudden shower sometimes surprizeth the traveller in a summer's day. It shall be as snares upon them, to hold them fast, and keep them prisoners, till the day of reckoning comes. (2.) Very terrible. *It is fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest,* which plainly alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and very fitly, for that destruction was intended for a figure of *the vengeance of eternal fire*, Jude 7. The fire of God's wrath fastning upon the brimstone of their own guilt will burn certainly, and furiously, will burn to the lowest hell, and to the utmost line of eternity. What a horrible tempest are the wicked hurried away in at death! What a lake of fire and brimstone must they make their bed in for ever, in the congregation of the dead and damned? That is it that is here meant; that is it that shall be the portion of their cup, the heritage appointed them by the Almighty, and allotted to them, *Job xx. 29.* This is the cup of trembling which shall be put into their hands, which they must *drink the dregs of*, *Psal. lxxv. 8.* Every man has the portion of his cup assigned him. They that chuse the Lord for the portion of their cup shall have what they chuse, and be for ever happy in their choice, *Psal. xvi. 5.* But they who reject his grace shall be made to drink the cup of his fury, *Jer. xxv. 15. Isa. li. 17. Hab. ii. 16.*

6. That tho' honest good people may be run down and trampled upon, yet God doth and will own them, and favour them, and smile upon them, and that is the reason why God will severely reckon with persecutors and oppressors, because those whom they oppress and persecute are dear to him, so that whosoever toucheth them, *toucheth the apple of his eye*, *ver. 7.* (1.) He loves them, and the work of his own grace in them. He is himself a righteous God, and therefore loves righteousness wherever he finds it, and pleads the cause of the righteous that are injured and oppressed; he delights to execute judgment for them, *Psal. ciii. 6.* We must herein be followers of God, must love righteousness as he doth, that we may keep ourselves always in his love. (2.) He looks graciously upon them; *His countenance doth behold the upright*, i. e. he is not only at peace with them, but well-pleased in them, and he comforts them, and puts gladness into their hearts by letting them know that he is so. He like a tender father looks upon them with pleasure, and they like dutiful children are pleased and abundantly satisfied with his smiles. They walk in the light of the Lord.

In singing this psalm we must encourage and engage our selves to trust in God at all times, must depend upon him to protect our innocency, and make us happy, must dread his frowns as worse than death, and desire his favour as better than life.

P S A L M XII.

It is supposed that David penned this psalm in Saul's reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and piety both in court and country, which he here complains of to God, and very feelingly, for he himself suffered by the treachery of his false friends, and the insolence of his sworn enemies. (1.) He begs help of God, because there were none among men whom he durst trust, ver. 1, 2. (2.) He foretels the destruction of his proud and threatening enemies, ver. 3, 4. (3.) He assures himself and others, that how ill soever things went now, ver. 8. God would preserve and secure to himself his own people, ver. 5, 7. and would certainly make good his promises to them, ver. 6. Whether this psalm was penned in Saul's reign or no, it is certainly calculated for a bad reign, and, perhaps, David in spirit foresaw, that some of his successors would bring things to as ill a pass as is here described, and treasured up this psalm for the use of the church then. O tempora, O mores!

¶ To the chief musician upon Sheminith,
A psalm of David.

1. **H**ELP, LORD, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. 2. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: *with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.* 3. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things. 4. Who have said, with our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own: who is lord over us? 5. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, (saith the LORD) I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. 6. The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. 8. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

This psalm furnisheth us with good thoughts for bad times, in which tho' the prudent will keep silent, *Amos v. 13.* because a man may be made an offender for a word, yet a man may comfort himself with such suitable meditations and prayers as are here got ready to our hand in such a day.

1. Let us see here what it is that makes the times bad, and when it may be said to be so. Ask the children of this world, what it is in their account that makes the times bad, and they will tell you scarcity of money, and decay of trade, and the desolations of war make the times bad; but the scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes of another nature, *2 Tim. iii. 1. Perilous times shall come*, for iniquity shall abound, and that is the thing David here complains of.

1. When there is a general decay of piety and honesty among men, the times are then truly bad, *ver. 1. When the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail.* Observe, How these two characters are here put together, the godly and the faithful. As there is no true policy, so there is no true piety without honesty. Godly men are faithful men, fast men, so they have sometimes been called; their word, is as confirming as their oath, as obliging as their bond; they make conscience of being true both to God and man. They are here said to cease and fail either by death or desertion, or both. Those that were godly and faithful are taken away, and those that are left are sadly degenerated, and are not what they were, so that there are few or no good people that are Israelites indeed to be met with. Perhaps, he means that there was no godly faithful men among Saul's courtiers; if he mean there were few or none in Israel, we hope he was under the same mistake that Elijah was, who thought he only was left alone, when God had seven thousand who kept their integrity, *Rom. xi. 3.* or he means there were few in comparison; there was a general decay of religion and virtue, and the times are bad, very bad, when it is so, not a man to be found that executes judgment, *Jer. v. 1.*

2. When dissimulation and flattery have corrupted and debauched all conversation, then the times are very bad, *ver. 2. when*



when men are generally so profligate, that they make no conscience of a lie, are so spiteful as to design against their neighbours the worst of mischiefs, and yet so base as to discover the design with the most specious and plausible pretences, and professions of friendship. Thus they speak vanity, *i. e.* falsehood and a lie, every one to his neighbour, with flattering lips and a double heart they will kiss and kill, (as Joab did Abner and Amasa in David's own time) smile in your face and cut your throat. This is the devil's image compleat, a complication of malice and falsehood. The times are bad indeed when there is no such thing as sincerity to be met with; when an honest man knows not who to believe, nor who to trust, nor dares put confidence in a friend, in a guide, *Mic. vii. 5, 6. Jer. ix. 4, 5.* Wo to those who help to make the times thus perilous.

3. When the enemies of God and religion, and religious people are impudent and daring, and threaten to run down all that is just and sacred, then the times are very bad: when proud sinners are arrived to such a pitch of impiety as to say, with our tongue will we prevail against the cause of virtue, our lips are our own, and we may say what we will, *Who is lord over us?* either to restrain us, or to call us to an account, *ver. 4.* This speaks, (1.) A proud conceit of themselves, and confidence in themselves, as if the point were indeed gained by eating forbidden fruit, and they were as gods, independent, and self-sufficient, infallible in their knowledge of good and evil, and therefore fit to be oracles; irresistible in their power, and therefore fit to be law-givers, that could prevail with their tongues, and, like God himself, speak and it is done. (2.) An insolent contempt of God's dominion; as if he had no propriety in them, their lips are their own; an unjust pretension, for who made man's mouth? In whose hand is the breath, and whose is the air he breathes in? And as if he had no authority either to command them, or judge them, *who is lord over us?* like Pharaoh, *Exod. v. 2.* And this is as absurd and unreasonable as the former, for he in whom we live and move and have our being, must needs be by an indisputable title Lord over us.

4. When the poor and needy are oppressed and abused and puffed at, then the times are very bad: This is implied, *ver. 5.* where God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy; they are oppressed because they are poor, have all manner of wrong done them, purely because they are not in a capacity to right themselves. Being thus oppressed they dare not speak for themselves, lest their defence should be made their offence, but they sigh, secretly bemoaning their calamities, and pouring out their souls in sighs before God. If their oppressors be spoken to on their behalf, they puff at them, make light of their own sin, and the misery of the poor, and lay neither to heart, see *Pfal. x. 5.*

5. When wickedness abounds and goes bare-faced under the protection and countenance of those in authority, then the times are very bad, *ver. 7.* When the vilest men are exalted to places of trust and power, that instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice, and punish the wicked according to their merits, patronize and protect them, give them countenance and support their reputation by their own example, then the wicked walk on every side, they swarm in all places, and go up and down seeking to deceive, and debauch, and destroy others; they are neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves; they declare their sin as Sodom, and there is none to check or control them. Bad men are base men, the vilest of men, and they are so, tho' they are never so highly exalted in this world. Antiochus the illustrious, the scripture calls a vile person, *Dan. xi. 21.* But it is bad with a kingdom when such are preferred, then no marvel if wickedness grow impudent and insolent. *When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.*

2. Let us now see what good things we are here furnished with for such bad times; and what times we may yet be reserved for we cannot tell.

When times are thus bad, it is comfortable to think,

1. That we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. This he begins with, *ver. 1. Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth.* All other helps and helpers fail, even the godly and faithful, who should lend a helping hand to support the dying cause of religion, they are gone, and therefore, whither shall we seek but to thee? Note, When godly faithful people cease and fail, it is time to cry, help Lord! The abounding of iniquity threatens a deluge. Help Lord, help the virtuous, few seek to hold fast their integrity, and to stand in the gap, help to save thine own interest in the world from sinking. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work.*

2. That God will certainly reckon with false and proud men, and will punish and restrain their insolence. They are above the control of men, and set them at defiance. Men cannot discover the falsehood of flatterers, nor humble the haughtiness of those that speak proud things; but the righteous God will cut off all flattering lips that give the traitor's kisses, and speak words softer than oil, when war is in the heart; he will pluck out the

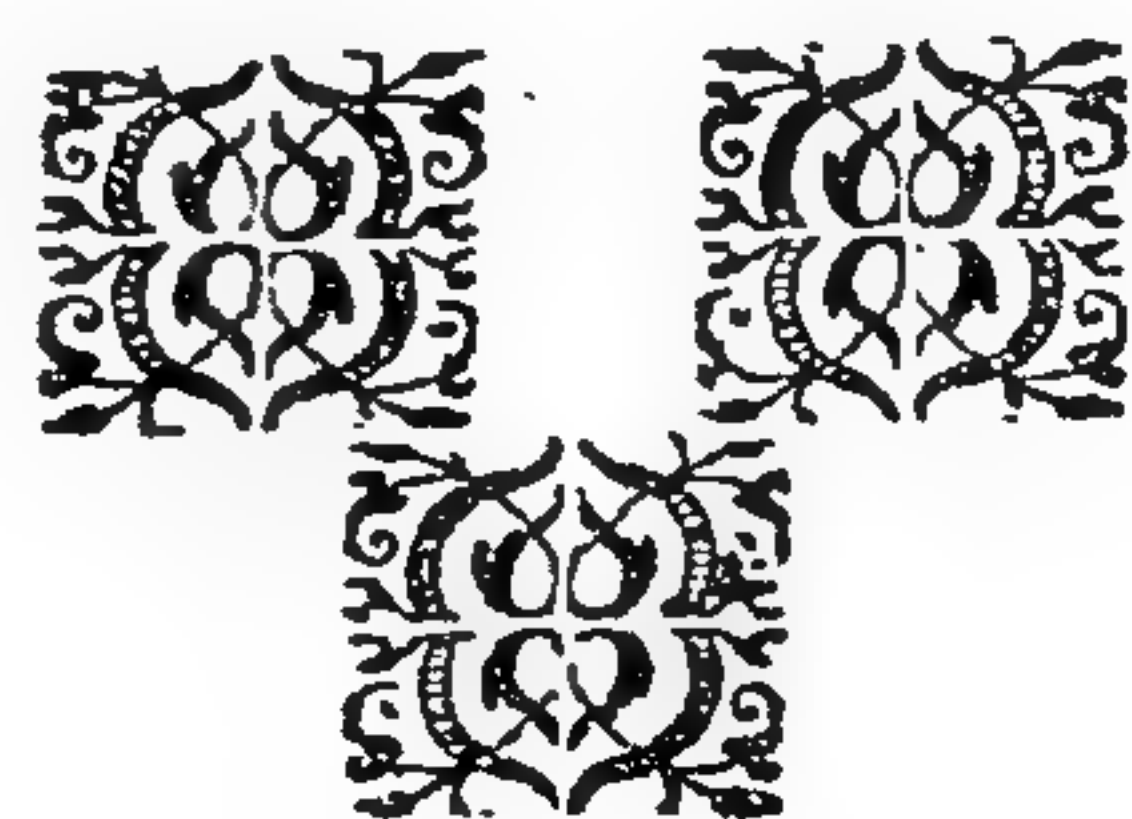
tongue that speaks proud things against God and religion, *ver. 3.* Some translate it as a prayer, May God cut off those false and spiteful lips, *Let lying lips be put to silence.*

3. That God will in due time work deliverance for his oppressed people, and shelter them from the malicious designs of their persecutors, *ver. 5. Now, will I arise, saith the Lord.* This promise of God, which David here delivered by the spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the spirit of prayer. Help, Lord, saith he; I will, saith God: Here I am with seasonable help, and effectual help. (1.) It is seasonable, now, in the fittest time. (1.) When the oppressors are in the height of their pride and insolence, when they say, *Who is lord over us?* then is God's time to let them know to their cost, that he is above them. (2.) When the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency; when they are fighting like Israel in Egypt by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God's time to appear for them, as for Israel when they were most dejected, and Pharaoh was most elevated. *Now will I arise.* Note, There is a time fixed for the rescue of oppressed innocency; that time will come, and we may be sure it is of all other the fittest time, *Pfal. cii. 13.* (2.) It is effectual; *I will set him in safety;* or, in salvation; not only protect him, but restore him to his former prosperity, will *bring him out into a wealthy place,* *Pfal. lxvi. 12.* So that upon the whole matter he shall lose nothing by his sufferings.

4. That tho' men are false, God is faithful, tho' they are not to be trusted, God is: They speak vanity and flattery, but *the words of the Lord are pure words,* *ver. 6.* not only all true, but all pure, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, or crucible. It notes, (1.) The sincerity of God's word, every thing is really as it is there represented, and not otherwise, it doth not jest with us, nor impose upon us, nor has it any other design upon us but our own good. (2.) The preciousness of God's word, it is of great intrinsic value, like silver refined to the highest degree: It has nothing in it to depreciate it. (3.) The many proofs that have been given of its power and truth; it has been often tried, all the saints in all ages have trusted it, and so tried it, and it never deceived them or frustrated their expectation, but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, with an *experto crede;* they have found it so. Probably, this refers especially to these promises of succouring and relieving the poor and oppressed. Their friends put them in hopes they will do something for them, and yet prove a broken reed. But the words of God are what we may rely upon: and the less confidence is to be put in mens words, let us with the more assurance trust in God's word.

5. That God must secure his chosen remnant to himself, how bad soever the times are, *ver. 7. Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.* This intimates that as long as the world stands, there will be a generation of proud and wicked men in it more or less, who will be in danger by their wretched arts of ruining religion, by *wearing out the saints of the most High,* *Dan. vii. 25.* But let God alone to maintain his own interest, and to preserve his own people. He will keep them from this generation, *i. e.* (1.) From being debauched by them, and drawn away from God, from mingling with them, and learning their works; in times of general apostasy the Lord knows them that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity. (2.) From being destroyed and rooted out by them; the church is built upon a rock, and so well fortified that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the worst of times God has his remnant, and in every age will reserve to himself a holy seed, and preserve that to his heavenly kingdom.

In singing this psalm, and praying it over, we must bewail the general corruption of manners, thank God that things are not worse than they are, but pray and hope that they will be better in God's due time.



P S A L M XIII.

This psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. Whether it was penned upon any particular occasion doth not appear, but in general; (1.) David sadly complains, that God had long withdrawn from him, and delayed to relieve him, ver. 1, 2. (2.) He earnestly prays to God to consider his case, and comfort him, ver. 3, 4. (3.) He assures himself of an answer of peace, and therefore concludes the psalm with joy and triumph, because he concludes his deliverance as good as wrought, ver. 5, 6.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **H**OW long wilt thou forget me, O LORD, for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? 2. How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? 3. Consider, and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; 4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me, rejoice when I am moved, 5. But I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. 6. I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

David in affliction is here pouring out his soul before God; his address is short, but the method is very observable; and of use for direction and encouragement.

1. His troubles extort complaints, *ver. 1, 2.* and the afflicted have liberty to *pour out the complaint before the Lord*, Psal. cii. tit. It is some ease to a troubled spirit to give vent to its griefs, especially to give vent to them at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find one who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people, and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have freedom of speech (*παρρησία*). Observe here,

1. What it is that David complains of. Three things,

(1.) God's unkindness, so he construed it, and it was his infirmity. He thought God had forgotten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, his former loving-kindness which he had shewed him, and which he took to be an earnest of further mercy; had forgotten, that there was such a man in the world, who needed and expected relief and succour from him. Thus Sion said, *My God has forgotten me*, Isa. xlix. 14. Israel said, *My way is hid from the Lord*, Isa. xl. 27. Not that any good man can doubt the omniscience, and goodness, and faithfulness of God, but it is a peevish expression of prevailing fear, which yet when it ariseth from a high esteem and earnest desire of God's favour, tho' it be indecent and culpable, shall be past by and pardoned, for the second thought will retract it, and repent of it. God hid his face from him, *i. e.* he wanted that inward comfort in God which he used to have, and herein was a type of Christ upon the cross crying out, *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* God sometimes hides his face from his own children, and leaves them in the dark concerning their interest in him: And this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatsoever.

(2.) His own uneasiness. 1. He was racked with care, that filled his head; *I take counsel in my soul*, *i. e.* I am at a loss, and am *inops consilii*, have no friend to advise with that I can put any confidence in, and therefore am myself continually projecting what to do to help myself, but none of my projects are likely to take effect. So that I am at my wit's end, and in a continual toils. Anxious cares are heavy burthens with which many times good people load themselves more than they need. (2.) He was overwhelmed with sorrow, that filled his heart. *I have sorrow in my heart daily*. He had a constant disposition to sorrow, and it preyed upon his spirits; not in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but by day too, when lighter griefs are diverted and dissipated by conversation and business: Nay, every day brought with it fresh occasions of grief: *The clouds returned after the rain*. The bread of sorrows is sometimes the saints daily bread; our master himself was a man of sorrows.

(3.) His enemies insolence, which added to his grief. Saul, his great enemy, and others under him, were exalted over him, triumphed in his distress, pleased themselves with his grief, and promised themselves a compleat victory over him. This he complained of as reflecting dishonour upon God, and his power and promise.

2. How he expostulates with God hereupon. How long shall it be thus? And shall it be thus for ever? Long afflictions try our patience, and often tire it. And it is a common temptation when trouble lasts long to think it will last always, and despondency then turns into despair, and those that have long been without joy, begin at last to be without hope: Lord, tell me how long thou wilt hide thy face, and assure me that it shall not be for ever, but that thou wilt return at length in mercy to me, and then I shall the easier bear my present troubles.

2. His complaints stir up his prayers, *ver. 3, 4.* We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what are fit to be offered up to God, and what drive us to our knees. Observe here,

(1.) What his petitions are. *Consider my case, hear my complaints, and lighten mine eyes*, *i. e.* (1.) Strengthen my faith, for faith is the eye of the soul with which it sees above, and sees through the things of sense. Lord, enable me to look beyond my present troubles, and to foresee a happy issue of them. (2.) Guide my way, enable me to look about me that I may avoid the snares which are laid for me. (3.) Refresh my soul with the joy of thy salvation. That which revives the drooping spirits is said to *enlighten the eyes*, 1 Sam. xiv. 27. Ezra ix. 8. Lord, scatter the cloud of melancholy which darkens my eyes, and let my countenance be made pleasant.

(2.) What his pleas are. He mentions his relations to God, and interest in him, *O Lord my God*, and insists upon the greatness of the peril, which called for speedy relief and succour: if his eyes were not lightened quickly. (1.) He concludes that he must perish. *I shall sleep the sleep of death*, I cannot live under the weight of all this care and grief. Nothing more killing to a soul than the want of God's favour, nothing more reviving than the return of it. (2.) That then his enemies would triumph, *lest mine enemy say*, so would I have it. Lest Saul, lest Satan, be gratified in my fall. It would gratify the pride of his enemy, he will say, I have prevailed, I have gotten the day, and been too hard for him and his God; it will gratify the malice of his enemies, they will *rejoice when I am moved*. And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth?

3. His prayers are soon turned into praises, *ver. 5, 6.* But *my heart shall rejoice, and I will sing to the Lord*. What a surprising change is here in a few lines! In the beginning of the psalm we have him drooping and trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair, but in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our *countenance be no more sad*, 1 Sam. i. 18. And here observe the method of his comfort.

1. God's mercy is the support of his faith. My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable till I consider the infinite goodness of God, and finding I have that to trust to, I am well enough, tho' I have no merit of my own. In former distresses *I have trusted in the mercy of God*, and I never found that it failed me, his mercy has in due time relieved me, and my confidence in it has in the mean time supported me. Even in the depth of this distress when God hid his face from me, when without were fightings, and within were fears, yet *I trusted in the mercy of God*, and that was an anchor in a storm, by the help of which, tho' I was tossed, I was not over-set. And still *I do trust in thy mercy*; so some read it. I refer myself to that, with an assurance that will do well for me at last. This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that *hope in his mercy*, Psal. cxlvii. 11.

2. His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with joy in his salvation; for joy and peace come by believing, Rom. xv. 13. *Believing ye rejoice*, 1 Pet. i. 8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart which was now daily grieving should *rejoice in that salvation*. Tho' weeping endure long, joy will return.

3. His joy in God's salvation would fill his mouth with songs of praise, *ver. 6.* *I will sing unto the Lord*; sing in remembrance of what he has done formerly, though I should never recover the peace I have had, I will die blessing God that ever I had it; he has dealt bountifully with me formerly, and he shall have the glory of that, however he is pleased to deal with me now. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me at last; being confident that all will end well, will end everlastingly well: But he speaks of it as a thing past, *he has dealt bountifully with me*,

me, because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation, and he was as confident of it as if it had been done already.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, if we have not the same complaints to make that David had, we must thank God that we have not, dread and deprecate his with-drawings, pity and sympathize with those that are troubled in mind, and encourage ourselves in our most holy faith and joy.

P S A L M XIV.

It doth not appear upon what occasion this psalm was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion; some say, David penned it when Saul persecuted him; others, when Absalom rebelled against him. But they are meer conjectures, which have not certainty enough to warrant us to expound the psalm by them. The apostle in quoting part of this psalm, Rom. iii. 10, &c. to prove that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, ver. 9. and all the world is guilty before God, ver. 19. leads us to understand it in general as a description of the pravity of the human nature, and the sinfulness of the sin we are conceived and born in; and the deplorable corruption of a great part of mankind, even of the world that lies in wickedness, 1 John v. 19. But as in those psalms which are designed to discover our remedy in Christ, there is commonly an allusion to David himself, yea, and some passages that are to be understood primarily of him, as in Psalm ii, xvi, xxii, and others; so in this psalm which is designed to discover our wound by sin; there is an allusion to David's enemies and persecutors, and other the oppressors of good men at that time, to whom some passages have an immediate reference. In all the psalms from the 3d to this (except the 8th) David had been complaining of those that hated and persecuted him, insulted him and abused him, now here he runs up all those bitter streams to the fountain, the general corruption of nature, and sees they were not his enemies only, but all the children of men that were thus corrupted. Here is, (1.) A charge exhibited against a wicked world, ver. 1. (2.) The proof of the charge, ver. 2, 3. (3.) A serious expostulation with sinners, especially with persecutors upon it, ver. 4, 5, 6. (4.) A believing prayer for the salvation of Israel, and a joyful expectation of it, ver. 7.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God: they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.* 2. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men; to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no not one.*

If we apply our hearts as Solomon did, *Ecc. vii. 26. to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness*, these verses will assist us in the search, and will shew us sin exceeding sinful. Sin is the disease of mankind, and it appears here to be malignant and epidemical.

1. See how malignant it is, ver. 1. in two things,

(1.) The contempt it puts upon the honour of God; for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin, *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.* We are sometimes tempted to think, sure there never was so much atheism and profaneness as there is in our days, but we see the former days were no better, even in David's time there were those who had arrived to such a height of impiety, as to deny the very being of a God, and the first and self-evident principles of religion. Observe, 1. The sinner here described. He is one that *saith in his heart, there is no God*; he is an atheist. There is no Elohim, no judge or governor of the world, no providence presiding over the affairs of men. They cannot doubt of the being of God, but will question his dominion. He saith this *in his heart*; it is not his judgment but his imagination. He cannot think there is none, but he willeth there were none, and pleaseth himself with the fancy, that it is possible there may be none, but he cannot be sure there is one, and therefore he is willing to think *there is none*. He does not speak it out lest he be confuted, and so undeceived, but he whispers it secretly *in his heart*, for the silencing of the clamours of his conscience, and the emboldening of himself in his evil ways. 2. The character of this sinner: He is a fool, he is simple and unwise: and this is an evidence of it: he is No. xxxix.

wicked and profane, and this is the cause of it. Note, Atheistical thoughts, are very foolish wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world. The word of God is a *discerner of these thoughts*, and puts a just brand on him that harbours them, *Nabal is his name, and folly is with him*; for he thinks against the clearest light, against his own knowledge and convictions, and the common sentiments of all the wise and sober part of mankind: and there is no man will say, *There is no God*, till he is so hardened in sin, that it is become his interest there should be none to call him to an account.

(2.) The disgrace and debasement it puts upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degenerated from what man was in his innocent estate: *They are become filthy*, ver. 3. putrid and stinking. All their faculties are so disordered, that they are become odious to their Maker, and utterly incapable to answer the ends of their creation. Corrupt indeed: for, 1. they do no good, but are the unprofitable burthens of the earth; they do God no service, bring him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness. 2. They do a great deal of hurt; they have *done abominable works*, for such all sinful works are; sin is an abomination to God, it is that *abominable thing which he hates*, Jer. xlv. 4. and sooner or later it will be so to the sinner, it will be *found to be hateful*, Psal. xxxvi. 2. an *abomination of desolation*, i. e. making desolate, *Matth. xxiv. 15.* This follows upon their saying, *There is no God*: for they that *profess they know God, but in works deny him, are abominable, and to every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16.

2. See how epidemical this disease is, it has infected the whole race of mankind. To prove this, God himself is here brought in for a witness, and he is an eye-witness, ver. 2, 3. Observe, (1.) His enquiry, *The Lord looked down from heaven*, a place of prospect which commands this lower world; from thence with an all-seeing eye, he took a view of all the children of men, and the question was, *Whether there were any among them that did understand themselves aright, their duty and interests, and did seek God, and set him before them.* He that made this search, was not only one that could find out a good man if he was to be found, tho' never so obscure; but one that would be glad to find out one, and would be sure to take notice of him as of Noah in the old world. (2.) The result of this enquiry, ver. 3. Upon search, upon his search, it appeared, *They are all gone aside*, the apostasy is universal, *there is none that doth good, no not one.* Till the free and mighty grace of God has wrought a change, whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, it is not of themselves, it is God's work in them. When God had made the world, he looked upon his own work, and *all was very good*, Gen. i. 31. but some time after, he looked upon man's work, and behold, *all was very bad*, Gen. vi. 5. every operation of the thought of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually. They are gone aside from the right way of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and are turned into the paths of the destroyer. In singing this, let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God; and since that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told, we must be born again.

4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD. 5. There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous. 6. You have shamed the counsel of the poor; because the LORD is his refuge. 7. O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoyce, and Israel shall be glad.

In these verses the psalmist endeavours,

1. To convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure soever they are in that way. Three things he shews them, which it may be they are not very willing to see, their wickedness, their folly, and their danger, while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and good, and safe. See here, (1.) Their wickedness: this is described in four instances. (1.) They are themselves workers of iniquity; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business. (2.) They eat up God's people with as much greediness as they eat bread; such an innate and inveterate enmity they have to them, and so heartily do they desire their ruin, because they really hate God, whose people they are. It is meat and drink to persecutors to be doing mischief; it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They eat up God's people easily, daily, securely, without either check of conscience when they do it, or remorse of conscience when they have done it; as Joseph's

Joseph's brethren *cast him into a pit*, and then *sat down to eat bread*, Gen. xxxvii. 24, 25. See *Mic.* iii. 2, 3. (3.) They *call not upon the Lord*. Note, Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of him. And the reason why people run into all manner of wickedness, even the worst, is, because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer? (4.) They *shame the counsel of the poor*, and upbraid them with making God their refuge, as David's enemies upbraided him, *Pfal.* xi. 1. Note, Those are very wicked indeed, and have a great deal to answer for, who not only shake off religion, and live without it themselves, but say and do what they can to put others out of conceit with it that are well inclined; with the duties of it, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable; and with the privileges of it, as if they were insufficient to make a man safe and happy. Those that banter religion, and religious people, will find to their cost it is ill jesting with edged-tools, and dangerous persecuting those that make God their refuge. *Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong*. He shews them (2.) Their folly: they have no knowledge, so it is a sign; for if they had any knowledge of God, if they did rightly understand themselves, and would but consider things as men, they would not be so abusive and barbarous as they are to the people of God. (3.) Their danger, *ver.* 5. *There were they in great fear*. There, where they eat up God's people, their own consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors: they sweetly sucked the blood of the saints, but in their bowels it is turned, and become the gall of asps. Many instances there have been of proud and cruel persecutors, who have been made like *Pashur Magor-missabib*, terrors to themselves and all about them. They that will not fear God, perhaps may be made to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

2. He endeavours to comfort the people of God, (1.) With what they have: they have God's presence, *ver.* 5. *He is in the generation of the righteous*; they have his protection, *ver.* 6. *The Lord is their refuge*. This is as much their security, as it is the terror of their enemies, who may jeer them for their confidence in God, but cannot jeer them out of it. In the judgment-day it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners to see God own the generation of the righteous, which they have hated and bantered. (2.) With what they hope for: and that is the *salvation of Israel*, *ver.* 7. When David was driven out by Absalom and his rebellious accomplices, he comforted himself with an assurance, that God would in due time *turn again his captivity*, to the joy of all his good subjects. But surely this pleasing prospect looks further. He had in the beginning of the psalm lamented the general corruption of mankind; and, in the melancholy view of that, wishes for the salvation, which in the fulness of time was to come out of Sion, salvation from sin, that great salvation which should be wrought out by the Redeemer, who was expected to *come to Sion*, to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, Rom. xi. 26. The world is bad, O that the Messiah would come and mend them! there is an universal corruption, Oh for the times of reformation! those will be as joyful times, as these are melancholy ones. Then shall God *turn again the captivity of his people*; for the Redeemer shall *ascend up on high*, and *lead captivity captive*, and Jacob shall in that rejoice. The triumphs of Sion's king, will be the joys of Sion's children. The second coming of Christ, finally to extinguish the dominion of sin and Satan, will be the compleating of this salvation, which is the hope, and will be the joy of every Israelite indeed: and with the assurance of that, we should in singing this comfort ourselves and one another, with reference to the present sins of sinners, and sufferings of saints.

P S A L M XV.

The scope of this short, but excellent psalm, is, to shew us the way to heaven; and to convince us, that if we would be happy, we must be holy and honest. Christ, who is himself the way, and in whom we must walk as our way, has also shewed us the same way that is here prescribed, Matth. xix. 17. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. In this psalm, (1.) By the question, *ver.* 1. we are directed and excited to enquire the way. (2.) By the answer to that question in the rest of the psalm, we are desired to walk, *ver.* 2, 3, 4, 5. (3.) By the assurance given in the close of the psalm, of the safety and happiness of those who answer these characters, we are encouraged to walk in that way, *ver.* 5.

¶ A psalm of David.

1. **L**ORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? 2. He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. 3. He that back-

biteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. 4. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. 5. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things, shall never be moved.

Here is, 1. A very serious and weighty question, concerning the characters of a citizen of Sion, *ver.* 1. *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?* i. e. Let me know who shall go down to heaven? Not, who by name, so the Lord only knows them that are his; but, who by description, what kind of people are they whom thou wilt own, and crown with distinguishing and everlasting favours? This supposeth that it is a great privilege to be a citizen of Zion, an unspeakable honour and advantage: that all are not thus privileged, but a remnant only; and that men are not entitled to this privilege by their birth and blood; all shall not *abide in God's tabernacle* that have Abraham to their father, but according as mens hearts and lives are, accordingly will their lot be. It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves, *Lord, what shall I be, and do, that I may abide in thy tabernacle?* Luke xviii. 18. Acts xvi. 30.

1. Observe, Who this enquiry is addressed to; to God himself. Note, Those that would find the way to heaven, must look up to God, must take direction from his word, and beg direction from his Spirit. It is fit he himself should give laws to his servants, and appoint the conditions of his favours, and tell who are his, and who not.

2. How it is expressed in Old Testament language, (1.) By the tabernacle we may understand the church militant, typified by Moses's tabernacle, fitted to a wilderness state, mean and moveable. There God manifests himself, and there he meets his people, as of old in the tabernacle of the testimony, the tabernacle of meeting. Who shall dwell in this tabernacle, i. e. who shall be accounted a true living member of God's church, admitted among the spiritual priests to lodge in the courts of this tabernacle? We are concerned to enquire this, because many pretend to a place in this tabernacle, who really have no part nor lot in the matter. (2.) By the holy hill, we may understand the church triumphant, alluding to mount Sion, on which the temple was to be built by Solomon. It is the happiness of glorified saints, that they dwell in that holy hill, they are at home there, they shall be for ever there. It concerns us to know who shall dwell there, that we make it sure to ourselves, that we shall have a place among them, and may then take the comfort of it, and rejoice in prospect of that holy hill.

2. A very plain and particular answer to this question. Those that desire to know their duty, with a resolution to do it, will find the scripture a very faithful director, and conscience a faithful monitor. Let us see then the particular characters of a citizen of Zion.

1. He is one that is sincere and entire in his religion. *He walketh uprightly*, according to the condition of the covenant, *Gen.* xvii. 1. *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*, (it is the same word that is here used) and then thou shalt find me a God all-sufficient. He is really what he professeth to be, is found at heart, and can approve himself to God in his integrity in all he doth; his conversation is uniform, and he is of a piece with himself, and endeavours to stand compleat in all the will of God. His eye perhaps is weak, but it is single; he has his spots indeed, but he doth not paint; an *Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*, Joh. i. 47. 2 Cor. i. 12. I know no religion but sincerity.

2. He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do. *He worketh righteousness*, i. e. he walks in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and takes care to give all their due; is just both to God and man; and in speaking to both, he speaketh that which is *the truth in his heart*; his prayers, professions, and promises to God, come out of feigned lips, nor dares he tell a lie, or so much as equivocate in his converse or commerce with men. He walks by the rules of righteousness and truth, and scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud; and reckons that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie; and, that he who wrongs his neighbour, tho' never so plausibly, will prove in the end to have done the greatest injury to himself.

3. He is one that contrives to do all the good he can to his neighbours, but is very careful to do hurt to no man, and is in a particular manner tender of his neighbour's reputation, *ver.* 3. He doth no evil at all to his neighbour willingly or designedly, nothing to offend or grieve his spirit, nothing to prejudice the health or ease of his body, nothing to injure him in his estate or secular interests, in his family or relations; but walks by that golden rule of equity, to do as he would be done by. He is especially careful not to injure his neighbour in his good name, because many

many, who would not otherwise wrong their neighbours make nothing of that; and he that in this matter bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain. He knows the worth of a good name, and therefore he backbiteth not, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not others faults the subject of his common talk, much less of his sport and ridicule, nor speaks of them with pleasure, nor at all but for edification; he makes the best of every body, and the worst of no body. He doth not take up a reproach, *i. e.* he neither raiseth it, nor receives it; he gives no credit nor countenance to a calumny, but frowns upon a backbiting tongue, and so silenceth it, *Prov. xxv. 23.* If an ill-natured character of his neighbour be given him, or an ill-natured story be told him, he will disprove it if he can; if not, it shall die with him, and go no further. His charity will cover a multitude of sins.

4. He is one that values men by their virtue and piety, and not by the figure they make in the world, *ver. 5.* (1.) He thinks the better of no man's wickedness, for his pomp and grandeur. *In his eyes a vile person is contemned.* Wicked people are vile people, worthless and good for nothing. So the word signifies, as dross, as chaff, and as salt that hath lost its flavour, they are vile in their choices, *Jer. ii. 13.* in their practices, *Isa. xxxii. 6.* And for this wise and good men condemn them, not denying them civil honour and respect as men, as men in authority and power perhaps, *1 Pet. ii. 17. Rom. xiii. 7.* but in their judgment of them, agreeing with the word of God. They are so far from envying them that they pity them, despise their gains, *Isa. xxxiii. 15.* as turning to no account; their dainties, *Psal. cxli. 4.* their pleasures, *Heb. xi. 24, 25.* as senseless and insipid. They despise their society, *Psal. cxix. 115. 2 Kings iii. 14.* despise their taunts and threats, and are not moved by them, nor disturbed at them; they despise the feeble efforts of their impotent malice, *Psal. ii. 1, 4.* and will shortly triumph in their fall, *Psal. lii. 6, 7.* God despiseth them, and they are of his mind. (2.) He thinks the worse of no man's piety for his poverty and meanness, *but he knows them that fear the Lord.* He reckons that serious piety, wherever it is found, puts an honour upon a man, and makes his face to shine more than wealth or wit, or a great name among men doth or can. He honours such, *i. e.* he esteems them very highly in love, desires their friendship and conversation, and an interest in their prayers, is glad of an opportunity to shew them respect, or do them a good office, pleads their cause, and speaks of them with veneration, rejoiceth when they prosper; grieves when they are removed, and their memory when they are gone is precious with him. By this we may judge of ourselves in some measure: what rules do we go by in judging of others?

5. He is one that always prefers a good conscience before any secular interest or advantage whatsoever; for if he has promised upon oath to do any thing, tho' afterwards it appear much to his damage and prejudice in his worldly estate, yet he sticks to it, and changeth not, *ver. 4.* See how weak-sighted and short-sighted even wise and good men may be, they may swear to their own hurt, which they were not aware of when they took the oath; but see how strong the obligation of an oath is, that a man must rather suffer loss to himself and his family, than wrong his neighbour by breaking his oath. An oath is a sacred thing, which we must not think to play fast and loose with.

6. He is one that will not increase his estate by any unjust practices, *ver. 5.* (1.) Not by extortion. *He putteth not out his money to usury,* that he may live at ease upon the labours of others, while he is in capacity of improving it by his own industry. Not that it is any breach of the law of justice or charity, for the lender to share in the profit which the borrower makes of his money, any more than the owner of the land to demand rent from the occupant, money being by art and labour as improveable as land. But a citizen of Zion will freely lend to the poor, according to his ability, and not be rigorous and severe in recovering his right from those that are reduced by providence. (2.) Not by bribery. He will not take a reward against the innocent, *i. e.* if he be any way employed in the administration of publick justice, he will not for any gain, or hope of it to himself, do any thing to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

3. The psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion: He is like Zion-hill itself, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever, *Psal. cxxv. 1.* Every true living member of the church, like the church itself, is built upon a rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against. *He that doth these things shall never be moved;* shall not be moved for ever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him, to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom; temptations shall not overcome him, troubles shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace, or his future bliss.

In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to answer the characters here given of the citizen of Zion, that we may never be moved from God's tabernacle on earth, and may arrive at last at that holy hill, where we shall be for ever, out of the reach of temptation and danger.

P S A L M XVI.

This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ. It begins with such expressions of devotion, as may be applied to Christ; but concludes with such confidence of a resurrection (and so timely a one as to prevent corruption) as must be applied to Christ, to him only, and cannot be understood of David, as both St Peter and St Paul have observed, Acts ii. 24.—xiii. 36. For David died, and was buried, and saw corruption. 1. David speaks of himself as a member of Christ, and so he speaks the language of all good christians, professing his confidence in God, ver. 1. His consent to him, ver. 2. His affection to the people of God, ver. 3. His adherence to the true worship of God, ver. 4. And his entire complacency and satisfaction in God, and the interest he had in him, ver. 5, 6, 7. 2. He speaks of himself as a type of Christ, and so he speaks the language of Christ himself, to whom all the rest of the psalm is expressly and at large applied, Acts ii. 25, &c. David speaketh concerning him (not concerning himself) I foresaw the Lord always before my face, &c. And this he spake being a prophet, ver. 30, 31. Spake (1.) Of the special presence of God with the Redeemer, in his services and sufferings, ver. 8. (2.) Of the prospect which the Redeemer had of his own resurrection, and the glory that should follow, which carried him cheerfully through his undertaking, ver. 9, 10, 11.

¶ Michtam of David.

1. **P**RESERVE me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. 2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee: 3. But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight. 4. Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. 5. The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. 6. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. 7. I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night-seasons.

This psalm is entitled Michtam, which some translate a golden psalm, a very precious one, more to be valued by us than gold, yea than much fine gold; because it speaks so plainly of Christ and his resurrection, who is the true treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament.

1. David here flies to God's protection with a cheerful believing confidence in it, *ver. 1. Preserve me, O God,* from the deaths, and especially from the sins to which I am continually exposed; for in thee, and in thee only, do I put my trust. Those that by faith commit themselves to the divine care, and submit themselves to the divine conduct, have reason to hope for the benefit of both. This is applicable to Christ, who prayed, *Father, save me from this hour,* and trusted in God that he would deliver him.

2. He recognizeth his solemn dedication of himself to God, as his God, *ver. 2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord,* and therefore thou mayst venture to trust him. Note, 1. It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acknowledge the Lord for our Lord, to subject ourselves to him, and then to stay ourselves upon him. Adonai signifies my stay, the strength of my heart. 2. This must be done with our souls. O my soul, thou hast said it. Covenanting with God must be heart-work, all that is within us must be employed therein, and engaged thereby. 3. Those who have avouched the Lord for their Lord, should be often putting themselves in mind of what they have done. Hast thou said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord? say it again then, stand to it, abide by it, and never unsay it. Hast thou said it? Take the comfort of it, and live up to it. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, and let thine eye be ever towards him.

3. He devotes himself to the honour of God, in the service of the saints, *ver. 3. My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints.* Observe (1.) Those that have taken the Lord for their Lord, must like him be good, and do good, we do not expect happiness without goodness. (2.) Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, we must humbly acknowledge that it extendeth not to God; so that we cannot pretend to merit any thing by it. God has no need of our services, he is not benefited by them, nor can they add any thing to his infinite perfection and blessed-

blestness. The wisest, and best, and most useful, men in the world, cannot be profitable to God, *Job* xxii. 2.—xxxv. 8. God is infinitely above us, and happy without us, and whatever good we do, it is all from him; so that we are indebted to him, not he to us: David owns it, *1 Chron.* xxix. 14. *Of thine own have we given thee.* (3.) If God be ours, we must for his sake extend our goodness to those that are his, to the saints in the earth; for what is done to them, he is pleased to take as done to himself, having constituted them his receivers. Note, (1.) There are saints in the earth, and saints on earth we must all be, or we shall never be saints in heaven. Those that are renewed by the grace of God, and devoted to the glory of God, are saints on earth. (2.) The saints in the earth are excellent ones, great, mighty, magnificent ones, and yet some of them so poor in the world, that they needed to have David's goodness extended to them. God makes them excellent by the grace he gives them. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*, and then he accounts them excellent; they are precious in his sight and honourable, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure. Their God is their glory, and a diadem of beauty to them. (3.) All that have taken the Lord for their God, delight in his saints as excellent ones, because they bear his image, and because he loves them. David, tho' a king, was a *companion for all that feared God*, *Psal.* cxix. 65. even the meanest, which was a sign that his delight was in them. (4.) It is not enough for us to delight in the saints, but as there is occasion, our goodness must extend to them; we must be ready to shew them the kindness they need, distribute to their necessities, and abound in the labour of love to them. This is applicable to Christ. The salvation he wrought out for us was no gain to God, for our ruin would have been no loss to him; but the goodness and benefit of it extends to us men, in whom he delighted, *Prov.* viii. 31. *For their sakes*, saith he, *I sanctify myself*, *John* xvii. 19. Christ delights even in the saints on earth, notwithstanding their weaknesses and manifold infirmities, which is a good reason why we should.

4. He disclaims the worship of all false Gods, and all communion with their worshippers, *ver.* 4. Where (1.) He reads the doom of idolaters, who hasten after another God, being mad upon their idols, and pursuing them as eagerly as if they were afraid they would overgo them; their sorrows shall be multiplied, both by the judgments they bring upon themselves from the true God whom they forsake, and by the disappointment they will meet with in the false gods they embrace. They that multiply gods, multiply griefs to themselves, for whosoever thinks one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough. (2.) He declares his resolution to have no fellowship with them, nor with their unfruitful works of darkness. *Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer*, not only because the gods they are offered to are a lie, but because the offerings themselves are barbarous: At God's altar, because the blood made atonement, the drinking of it was most strictly prohibited, and the drink-offerings were of wine; but the devil prescribed his worshippers to drink of the blood of the sacrifices, to teach them cruelty. I will have nothing to do (saith David) with those bloody deities, nor so much as take their names into my lips with any delight in them, or respect to them. Thus must we hate idols and idolatry with a perfect hatred. Some make this also applicable to Christ, and his undertaking, shewing the nature of the sacrifice he offered, it was not the blood of bulls and goats, which was offered according to the law; that was never named, nor did he ever make any mention of it, but his own blood; shewing also the multiplied sorrows of the unbelieving Jews, who hastened after another king, Cæsar, and are still hastening after another Messiah, whom they in vain look for.

5. He repeats the solemn choice he had made of God for his portion and happiness, *ver.* 5. takes to himself the comfort of the choice, *ver.* 6. and gives God the glory of it, *ver.* 7. This is very much the language of a devout and pious soul, in its gracious exercises.

1. Choosing the Lord for its portion and happiness: The most of men take the world for their chief good, and place their felicity in the enjoyments of it; but this I say, *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup.* The portion I make choice of, and will gladly take up with, how poor soever my condition is in this world; let me have the love and favour of God, and be accepted of him, let me have the comfort of communion with God, and satisfaction in the communications of his graces and comforts. Let me have an interest in his promises, and a title by promise to everlasting life and happiness in the future state, and I have enough, I need no more, I desire no more to compleat my felicity. Would we do well and wisely for ourselves, we must take God in Christ to be, (1.) The portion of our inheritance in the other world; heaven is an inheritance, God himself is the inheritance of the saints there, whose everlasting bliss it is to enjoy him. We must take that for our inheritance, our home, our rest, our lasting everlasting good, and look upon this world to be no more ours, than the country is through which our road lies, when we are in a journey. (2.) The portion of our cup in this world, with which I am nourished and refreshed, and kept from fainting. Those have not God for theirs, who do not reckon his comforts the most reviving cordials, acquaint them-

selves with them, and make use of them as sufficient to balance all the grievances of this present time, and to sweeten the most bitter cup of affliction.

2. Confiding in him for the securing of this portion. *Thou maintainest my lot.* Thou that hast by promise made over thyself to me to be mine, wilt graciously make good what thou hast promised, and never leave me to myself to forfeit this happiness, nor leave it in the power of mine enemies to rob me of it. Nothing shall pluck me out of thy hands, nor separate me from thy love, and the sure mercies of David. The saints and their bliss are kept by the power of God.

3. Rejoicing in this portion, and taking a complacency in it, *ver.* 6. *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places*; those have reason to say so, that have God for their portion, they have a worthy portion, a goodly heritage. What can they have better? What can they desire more? *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, and look no further. Note, Gracious souls, tho' they still covet more of God, never covet more than God; but being satisfied of his loving kindness, are abundantly satisfied with it, and envy not any their carnal mirth, and sensual pleasures and delights, but account themselves truly happy in what they have, and doubt not but to be completely happy in what they hope for. Those whose lot is cast, as David's was, in a land of light, in a valley of vision, where God is known and worshipped, have upon that account reason to say, the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places, much more they that have not only the means, but the end, not only Immanuel's land, but Immanuel's love.

4. Giving thanks to God for it, and for grace to make this wife and happy choice, *ver.* 7. *I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel*, this counsel, to take him for my portion and happiness. So ignorant and foolish are we, that if we be left to ourselves, our hearts will follow our eyes, and we shall chuse our own delusions, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities; and therefore if we have indeed taken God for our portion, and preferred spiritual and eternal blessings before those that are sensible and temporal, we must thankfully acknowledge the power and goodness of divine grace, directing and enabling us to make that choice. If we have the pleasure of it, let God have the praises of it.

5. Making a good use of it. God having given him counsel by his word and Spirit, his own reins, *i. e.* his own thoughts also, instructed him in the night-season, when he was silent and solitary, and retired from the world, then his own conscience (which is called the reins, *Jer.* xvii. 10.) not only reflected with comfort upon the choice he had made, but instructed or admonished him concerning his duty, which he was obliged to by this choice; catechized him, and engaged, and quickened him to live as one that had God for his portion, by faith to live upon him, and live to him. Those who have God for their portion, who will be faithful to them, must give their own consciences leave to deal thus faithfully and plainly with them.

All this may be applied to Christ, who made the Lord his portion, and was pleased with that portion, made his Father's glory his highest end, and made it his meat and drink to seek that, and to do his will, and delighted to prosecute his undertaking, pursuant to his Father's counsel, depending upon him to maintain his lot, and to carry him through his undertaking. We may also apply it to ourselves in singing it, renewing our choice of God as ours, with a holy complacency and satisfaction.

8. I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption. 11. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand *there are pleasures for evermore.*

All these verses are quoted by St Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the Spirit, on the day of pentecost, *Acts* ii. 25—28. and he tells us expressly, that David in them speaketh concerning Christ, and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections towards God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope, and a happy state on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God; but in these holy elevations towards God and heaven, he was carried by the spirit of prophecy, quite beyond the consideration of himself and his own case, to foretell the glory of the Messiah, in such expressions as were peculiar to that, and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnisheth us with a key to let us into the mystery of these lines.

1. These verses, for certain, must be applied to Christ; of him speaketh the prophet this, as did many of the Old Testament prophets, who testified before-hand, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory

glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. and that is the subject of this prophecy here: it is foretold (as he himself shewed concerning this, no doubt, among other prophecies in this psalm, Luke xxiv. 44, 46.) that *Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead*, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

1. That he should suffer and die. This is implied here, when he saith, *ver. 8. I shall not be moved*, he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him. When he saith, *my flesh shall rest*, it is implied, that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated, that his soul must go into a state of separation from the body, and that his body so deserted, would be in imminent danger of seeing corruption; that he should not only die, but be buried, and abide for some time under the power of death.

2. That he should be wonderfully born up by the divine power in suffering and dying. (1.) That he should not be moved, nor be driven off from his undertaking, nor sink under the weight of it; that he should not fail nor be discouraged, *Isa. xlii. 4.* but should proceed and persevere in it, till he could say, *It is finished*. Tho' the service was hard, and the encounter hot, and he trod the wine-press alone; yet he was not moved, did not give up the cause, but set his face as a flint, *Isa. l. 7, 8, 9. Here am I, let these go their way.* Nay, (2.) That his heart should rejoice, and his glory be glad, that he should go on with his undertaking, not only resolutely, but cheerfully, and with an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction, witness that saying, *John xvii. 11. Now I am no more in the world, but I come to thee*; and that *John xviii. 11. The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?* and many the like. By his glory, is meant his tongue, as appears, *Acts ii. 26.* for our tongue is our glory, and never more so, than when it is employed in glorifying God.

Now there were two things which bore him up, and carried him on thus cheerfully. (1.) The respect he had to his Father's will and glory in what he did: *I have set the Lord always before me*; he still had an eye to his Father's commandment, *John x. 18.—xiv. ult.* the will of him that sent him: He aimed at his Father's honour, and the restoring of the interests of his kingdom among men, and this kept him from being moved by the difficulties he met with; for he always did those things that pleased his Father. (2.) The assurance he had of his Father's presence with him in his sufferings, *he is at my right hand*; a present help to me, nigh at hand in the time of need, *Isa. l. 8. He is near that justifieth me*, he is at my right hand to direct and strengthen it, and hold it up, *Psal. lxxxix. 21.* When he was in his agony, an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, *Luke xxii. 43.* To this the victories and triumphs of the cross were all owing, it was the Lord at his right hand, that *struck through kings*, *Psal. cx. 5. Isa. xlii. 1, 2.* (3.) The prospect he had of a glorious issue of his sufferings. It was *for the joy set before him*, that he *endured the cross*, *Heb. xii. 2.* He rested in hope, and that made his rest glorious, *Isa. xi. 10.* He knew he should be justified in the Spirit by his resurrection, and straitway glorified. See *John xiii. 31, 32.*

3. That he should be brought through his sufferings, and brought from under the power of death by a glorious resurrection. (1.) That his soul should not be left in hell, *i. e.* his human spirit should not be long left, as other mens spirits are, in a state of separation from the body, but should in a little time return, and be re-united to it, never to part again. (2.) That being God's holy one in a peculiar manner, sanctified to the work of redemption, and perfectly free from sin, he should not see corruption, nor feel it. This implies, that he should not only be raised from the grave, but raised so soon, that his dead body should not so much as begin to corrupt, which in the course of nature it would have done, if it had not been raised the third day. We that have so much corruption in our souls, must expect that our bodies also will corrupt, *Job xxiv. 19.* But that holy one of God, who knew no sin, saw no corruption. Under the law it was strictly ordered, that those parts of the sacrifices which were not burnt upon the altar, yet should by no means be kept till the third day, lest they should putrefy, *Lev. vii. 15, 18.* which perhaps pointed at Christ's rising the third day, that he might not see corruption, as neither was a bone of him broken.

4. That he should be abundantly recompensed for his sufferings, with the joy set before him, *ver. 11.* He was well assured, (1.) That he should not miss of his glory. Thou wilt shew me the path of life, and lead me to that life thro' this darksome valley; in confidence of this, when he gave up the ghost, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit*; and a little before, *Father, glorify thou me with thine own self.* (2.) That he should be received into the presence of God, to sit at his right hand. His being admitted into God's presence, would be the acceptance of his service; and his being set at his right hand, the recompence of it. (3.) Thus, as a reward for the sorrows he underwent for our redemption, he should have a fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore; not only the glory he had with God, as God before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a mediator in
No. xxxix.

seeing his seed, and the success and prosperity of his undertaking, *Isa. liii. 10, 11.*

2. Christ being the head of the body the church, these verses may, for the most part, be applied to all good christians, who are guided and animated by the Spirit of Christ; and in singing of them, when we have first given glory to Christ, in whom they have to our everlasting comfort had their accomplishment, we may then encourage and edify ourselves, and one another with them, and may from hence learn,

1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually at our right hand, wherever we are, to eye him as our chief good and highest end, our owner, ruler, and judge, our gracious benefactor, our sure guide, and strict observer; and while we do thus, we shall not be moved, either from our duty, or from our comfort. Blessed Paul set the Lord before him, when, tho' bonds and afflictions did abide him, he could bravely say, *None of these things move me*, *Acts xx. 24.*

2. That if our eyes be ever towards God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him; it is our own fault if they do not. If the heart rejoice in God, out of the abundance of that let the mouth speak to his glory, and the edification of others.

3. That dying christians, as well as a dying Christ, may cheerfully put off the body in a believing expectation of a joyful resurrection; *my flesh also shall rest in hope.* Our bodies have little rest in this world, but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, *Isa. lvii. 2.* We have little to hope for from this life, but we shall rest in hope of a better life, *i. e.* we may put off the body in that hope. Death destroys the hope of man, *Job xiv. 14.* but not the hope of a good christian, *Prov. xiv. 32.* He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments; hopes that the body shall not be left for ever in the grave; but tho' it see corruption for a time, it shall at the end of time be raised to immortality; Christ's resurrection is an earnest of ours, if we be his.

4. That those who live piously with God in their eye, may die comfortably with heaven in their eye. In this world sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy; all our joys here are empty and defective; but in heaven there is a fulness of joy; our pleasures here are transient and momentary, and such is the nature of them, that it is not fit they should last long; but those at God's right hand, are pleasures for evermore; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls, in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God.

P S A L M XVII.

David being in great distress and danger by the malice of his enemies, doth in this psalm by prayer address himself to God, his tried refuge, and seeks shelter in him. (1.) He appeals to God concerning his integrity, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) He prays to God still to be upheld in his integrity, and preserved from the malice of his enemies, *ver. 5—8, 13.* (3.) He gives a character of his enemies, using that as a plea with God for his preservation, *ver. 9—12, 14.* (4.) He comforts himself with the hopes of his future happiness, *ver. 14.* And some make him in this a type of Christ, who was perfectly innocent, and yet was hated and persecuted; but, like David, committeth himself and his cause to him that judgeth righteously.

¶ A Prayer of David.

1. **H**EAR the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. 2. Let my sentence come forth from thy presence: let thine eyes behold the things that are equal. 3. Thou hast proved mine heart, thou hast visited me in the night, thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing: I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. 4. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. 5. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. 6. I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. 7. Shew thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee, from those that rise up against them.

This psalm is a prayer; as there is a time to weep, and a time to rejoice, so there is a time for praise, and a time for prayer. David was now persecuted, probably by Saul, who hunted him like

like a partridge on the mountains; without were fightings, within were fears, and both drove him to his prayers.

He addresseth himself to God in these verses, both by way of appeal, *Hear the right, O Lord*, i. e. let my righteous cause have a hearing before thy tribunal, and give judgment upon it; and by way of petition, *Give ear unto my prayer*, ver. 1. and again, ver. 6. *Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech*; not that God needs to be thus pressed with our importunity, but he gives us leave thus to express our earnest desires of his gracious answers to our prayers. These things he pleads with God for audience, (1.) That he was sincere, and did not dissemble with God in his prayer; *it goeth not out of feigned lips*. He meant as he spoke, and the impressions on his mind agreed with the expressions of his mouth. Feigned prayers are fruitless, but if our hearts lead our prayers, God will meet them with his favour. (2.) That he had been used to pray at other times, and it was not his distress and danger that now first brought him to his duty. *I have called upon thee formerly*, ver. 6. therefore, Lord, hear me now. It will be a great comfort to us, if trouble, when it comes, finds the wheels of prayer a going, for then may we come with the more boldness to the throne of grace. Tradesmen are willing to oblige those that have been long their customers. (3.) That he was encouraged by his faith to expect God would take notice of his prayers; I know thou wilt hear me, and therefore, O God, *incline thine ear to me*. Our believing dependence upon God, is a good plea to enforce our desires towards him. Let us now see,

1. What his appeal is. And there observe,

(1.) What the court is, to the cognizance and determination of which he doth appeal. It is the court of heaven. Lord, do thou hear the right, for Saul is so passionate, so prejudiced, he will not hear it. Lord, *let my sentence come forth from thy presence*, ver. 2. Men sentence me to be run down, and cut off as an evil doer. Lord, I appeal from them to thee. This he did in a publick remonstrance before Saul's face, 1 Sam. xxiv. 12. *The Lord judge between me and thee*; and he repeats it here in his private devotions. Note, (1.) The equity and extent of God's government and judgment, is a very great support to injured innocency. If we are blackned, and abused, and misrepresented by unrighteous men, it is our comfort that we have a righteous God to go to, who will take our part, who is the patron of the oppressed, whose judgment is according to truth, by the discoveries of which, every person, and every cause, will appear in a true light, stripped of all false colours, and by the divisions of which, all unrighteous dooms will be reversed, and to every man will be rendered according to his work. (2.) Sincerity dreads no scrutiny, no not that of God himself, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. *Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal*. God's omniscience is as much the joy of the upright, as it is the terror of hypocrites; and is particularly comfortable to those who are falsely abused, and in any wise have wrong done them.

(2.) What the evidence is, by which he hopes to make good his appeal, it is the trial God had made of him, ver. 3. *Thou hast proved mine heart*. God's sentence is therefore right, because he always proceeds upon his own knowledge, which is more certain and infallible, than that which men attain to by the closest views and the strictest searches. He knew God had tried him, (1.) By his own conscience, which is God's deputy in the soul; *The spirit of a man, is the candle of the Lord*, with this God had searched him, and visited him in the night, when he communed with his own heart upon his bed. He had submitted to the search, and had seriously reviewed the actions of his life, to discover what was amiss; but could find nothing of that which his enemies charged him with. (2.) By providence; God had tried him by the fair opportunity he had once and again to kill Saul; and tried him by the malice of Saul, the treachery of his friends, and the many provocations that were given him, so that if he had been the man he was represented to be, it would have appeared; but upon all these trials there was nothing found against him, no proof at all of the things whereof they accuse him.

God tried his heart, and could witness to the integrity of that; but for the further proof of his integrity, he himself takes notice of two things, concerning which his conscience bore him record. (1.) That he had a fixed resolution against all tongue sins: I am purposed and fully determined in the strength of God's grace, that my mouth shall not transgress. He doth not say, I hope it shall not, or I wish it may not, but I am fully purposed that it shall not: with this bridle he kept his mouth, Psal. xxxix. 2. Note, Constant resolution and watchfulness against tongue sins, will be a good evidence of our integrity. *If any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*, Jam. iii. 2. He doth not say, my mouth never shall transgress, for in many things we all offend. But I am purposed that it shall not, and he that searcheth the heart, knows whether the purpose be sincere. (2.) That he had been as careful to refrain from sinful actions, as from sinful words, ver. 4. Concerning the common works of men, the actions and affairs of human life, I have, by the direction of thy word, *kept me from the paths of the destroyer*. Some understand it particularly, that he had not been himself a destroyer of Saul, when it lay in his power, nor had he permitted others to be so,

but said to Abishai, *Destroy him not*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 9. But it may be taken more generally, he kept himself from all evil works, and endeavoured, according to the duty of his place, to keep others from them too. Note, (1.) The ways of sin are paths of the destroyer, i. e. of the devil, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, i. e. a destroyer, and who ruins souls by decoying them into the paths of sin. (2.) It concerns us all to keep out of the paths of the destroyer, for if we walk in those ways that lead to destruction, we must thank ourselves if destruction and misery be our portion at last. (3.) It is by the word of God, as our guide and rule, that we must keep out of the paths of the destroyer, by observing the directions and admonitions of that, Psal. cxix. 9. (4.) If we carefully avoid all the paths of sin, it will be very comfortable in the reflection, when we are in trouble. If we *keep ourselves, that the wicked one touch us not* with his temptations, 1 John v. 18: we may hope he shall not be able to touch us with his terrors.

2. What his petition is: It is in short this; That he might experience the good work of God in him, as an evidence of, and qualification for the good will of God towards him: this is grace and peace from God the Father.

1. He prays for the work of God's grace in him, ver. 5. *Hold up my goings in thy paths*. Lord, I have by thy grace kept me from the paths of the destroyer, by the same grace let me be kept in thy paths, let me not only be restrained from doing that which is evil, but quickened to abound always in that which is good. Let my goings be held in thy paths, that I may not turn back from them, nor turn aside out of them; let them be held up in thy paths, that I may not stumble and fall into sin, that I may not trifle and neglect my duty. Lord, as thou hast kept me hitherto, so keep me still. Those that are thro' grace going in God's paths, have need to pray, and do pray that their goings may be held up in those paths; for we stand no longer than he is pleased to hold us, we go no further than he is pleased to lead us, bear us up, and carry us. David had been kept in the way of his duty hitherto, and yet he doth not think that would be his security for the future, and therefore prays, Lord, still hold me up: Those that would proceed and persevere in the way of God, must by faith and prayer fetch in daily fresh supplies of grace and strength from him. David was sensible that his way was slippery, that he himself was weak, and not so well fixed and furnished as he should be; that there were those who watched for his halting, and would improve the least slip against him, and therefore he prays, Lord, hold me up, that my foot slip not, that I may never say or do any thing that looks either dishonest, or distrustful of thee and thy providence and promise.

2. He prays for the tokens of God's favour to him, ver. 7. Observe here, (1.) How he eyes God, as the protector and favour of his people, so he calls him, and from that he takes his encouragement in prayer. *O thou that savest by thy right hand*, (by thine own power, and needest not the agency of any other) *them which put their trust in thee, from those that rise up against them*. It is the character of God's people, that they trust in him; he is pleased to make them his confidants, for his secret is with the righteous; and they make him their confidence, for to him they commit themselves: those that trust in God have many enemies, many that rise up against them, and seek their ruin; but they have one friend that is able to deal with them all, and if he be for them, no matter who is against them. He reckons it his honour to be their saviour. His almighty power is engaged for them, and they have all found him ready to save them. The margin reads it, *O thou that savest them which trust in thee, from those that rise up against thy right hand*. Those that are enemies to the saints, are rebels against God and his right hand, and therefore, no doubt, he will in due time appear against them. (2.) What he expects and desires from God: *Shew thy marvellous loving-kindness*. The word signifies, (1.) Distinguishing favours. Set apart thy loving-kindnesses for me, put me not off with common mercies, but be gracious to me, *as thou usest to do to those who love thy name*. (2.) Wonderful favours. O make thy loving-kindness admirable; i. e. Lord, testify thy favour to me in such a way, as that I and others may wonder at it. God's loving-kindness is marvellous, for the freeness and the fulness of it, in some instances it appears in a special manner marvellous, Psal. cxviii. 24. and it will certainly appear so in the salvation of the saints, when Christ shall come to be *glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe*.

8. Keep me as the apple of the eye: hide me under the shadow of thy wings, 9. From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. 10. They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. 11. They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth: 12. Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. 13. Arise, O LORD, dis-appoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: 14. From men which are

are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, *which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.* 15. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

We may observe in these verses,

1. What David prays for. Being compassed about with enemies that sought his life, he prays to God to preserve him safe, through all their attempts against him, to the crown to which he was anointed; and this prayer was both a prediction of the preservation of Christ, through all the hardships and difficulties of his humiliation, to the glories and joys of his exalted state, and a pattern to christians to commit the keeping of their souls to God, trusting him to *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom.* He prays,

(1.) That he himself might be protected, *ver. 8.* keep me safe, hide me close, where I may not be found, where I may not be come at. Deliver my soul, not only my mortal life from death, but my immortal spirit from sin. Those who put themselves under God's protection, may in faith implore the benefit of it. He prays that God would keep him, (1.) With as much care as a man keeps the apple of his eye, which nature has wonderfully fenced, and teaches us to guard. If we keep God's law as the *apple of our eye*, Prov. vii. 2. we may expect that God will so keep us, for it is said concerning his people, that *who so toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye*, Zach. ii. 8. (2.) With as much tenderness, as the hen gathers her young ones under her wings; Christ useth the similitude, *Matt. xxiii. 37.* Hide me under the shadow of thy wings, where I may be both safe and warm. Or, perhaps, it rather alludes to the wings of the cherubins shadowing the mercy-seat; let me be taken under the protection of that glorious grace which is peculiar to God's Israel. What David here prays for, was performed to the son of David our Lord Jesus, of whom it is said, *Isa. xlix. 2.* that God hid him in the shadow of his hand, hid him as a polished shaft in his quiver. David prays, Lord, keep me from the wicked, from men of the world, *i. e.* (1.) From being and doing like them, from walking in their counsel, and standing in their way, and eating of their dainties. (2.) From being destroyed and run down by them. Let them not have their will against me, let them not triumph over me.

(2.) That all the designs of his enemies to bring him either into sin, or into trouble, might be defeated, *ver. 13.* Arise, O Lord, appear for me, disappoint him, and cast him down in his own eyes by the disappointment. While Saul persecuted David, how often did he miss his prey, then when he thought he had him sure enough. And how were Christ's enemies disappointed by his resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death.

2. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions, and his hope of speeding. He pleads,

1. The malice and wickedness of his enemies. They are such as are not fit to be countenanced, such, as if I be not delivered from them, by the special care of God himself, will be my ruin. Lord, see what wicked men they are that oppress me, and waste me, and run me down. (1.) They are very spiteful and malicious; they are my deadly enemies that thirst after my blood, my heart's blood; enemies against the soul, so the word is; David's enemies did what they could to drive him to sin, and drive him away from God, they bid him *go serve other gods*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. and therefore he had reason to pray against them. Note, Those are our worst enemies, and we ought so to account them, that are enemies to our souls. (2.) They are very secure and sensual, insolent and haughty, *ver. 10.* They are inclosed in their own fat, wrap themselves, hug themselves in their own honour, and power, and plenty, and then make light of God, and set his judgments at defiance, *Job. xv. 27.* Psal. lxxiii. 7. They wallow in pleasure, and promise themselves, that to morrow shall be as this day. And therefore with their mouth they speak proudly, glorying in themselves, blaspheming God, trampling upon his people, and insulting them, see *Rev. xiii. 5, 6.* Lord, are not such men as these fit to be mortified and humbled, and made to know themselves? Will it not be for thy glory to look upon these proud men and abase them? (3.) They are restless and unwearied in their attempts against me, they compass me about, *ver. 9.* They have now in a manner gained their point, they have surrounded us, they have compassed us in our steps, they track us wherever we go, follow us as close as the hound doth the hare, and take all advantage against us, being both too many for us, and too quick for us. And yet they take on them to look another way, and set their eyes bowing down to the earth, as if they were meditating, retired into themselves, and thinking of something else; or (as some think) they are watchful and intent upon it, to do us a mischief; they are down-looked, and never slip an opportunity of compassing their design. (4.) The ring-leader of them, that was Saul, is in a special manner bloody and barbarous, politick and projecting, *ver. 12.* like a lion that lives by prey, and is

therefore greedy of it. It is as much the meat and drink of a wicked man to do mischief, as it is of a good man to do good. He is like a young lion lurking in secret places, disguising his cruel designs. This is fitly applied to Saul, who sought David on the rocks of the wild goats, 1 Sam. xxiv. 2. and in the wilderness of Ziph, chap. xxvi. 2. where lions used to lurk for their prey.

2. The power God had over them to control and restrain them. He pleads, (1.) Lord, they are thy sword, and will any father suffer his sword to be drawn against his own children? As this is a reason why we should patiently bear the injuries of men, that they are but the instruments of the trouble, it comes originally from God, to whose will we are bound to submit; so it is an encouragement to us to hope both that their wrath shall praise him, and that the remainder thereof he will restrain, that they are God's sword which he can manage as he pleaseth, which cannot move without him, and which he will sheathe when he has done his work with it. (2.) They are thy hand, by which thou dost chastise thy people, and make them feel thy displeasure. He therefore expects deliverance from God's hand, because from God's hand the trouble came. *Una eademque manus vulnus operemque tulit.* There is no flying from God's hand but by flying to it. It is very comfortable when we are in fear of the power of man, to see it dependent upon, and in subjection to, the power of God, see *Isa. x. 6, 7, 15.*

3. Their outward prosperity, *ver. 14.* Lord, appear against them, for, (1.) They are entirely devoted to the world, and care not for thee and thy favour. They are men of the world, acted by the spirit of the world, walking according to the course of this world, in love with the wealth and pleasure of this world, eager in the pursuits of it, and making them their business; and at ease in the enjoyments of it, and making them their bliss. They have their portion in this life, *i. e.* they look upon the good things of this world as the best things, and sufficient to make them happy, and they chuse them accordingly, place their felicity in them, aim at them as their chief good, rest satisfied with them, their souls take their ease in them, and they look no farther, nor are in any care to provide for another life. These things are their consolation, *Luke vi. 24.* their good things, *Luke xvi. 25.* their reward, *Matt. vi. 5.* the penny they agreed for, *Matt. xx. 13.* Now, Lord, shall men of this character be supported and countenanced against those that honour thee, by preferring thy favour before all the wealth in this world, and taking thee for their portion, *Psal. xvi. 5.* (2.) They have abundance of the world, (1.) They have enlarged appetites, and a great deal wherewith to satisfy them, their belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures. The things of this world are called treasures, because they are so accounted; otherwise to a soul, and in comparison with eternal blessings they are but trash: They are hid in the several parts of the creation, and hid in the sovereign disposals of providence. They are God's hid treasures, for the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, tho' the men of the world think it is their own, and forget God's property in it. They that fare deliciously every day, have their bellies filled with these hid treasures, and they will but fill the belly, 1 Cor. vi. 13. they will not fill the soul, they are not bred for that, nor can they satisfy, *Isa. lv. 2.* They are husks, and ashes, and wind, and yet the most of men having no care for their souls, but all for their bellies, take up with them. (2.) They have numerous families, and a great deal to leave to them. They are full of children, and yet their pasture is not overstocked, they have enough for them all, and leave the rest of their substance to the babes, *i. e.* to their grand-children; and this is their heaven, it is their bliss, it is their all. Lord, said David, Deliver me from them, *i. e.* let not me have my portion with them. Deliver me from their designs against me, for they having so much wealth and power, I am not able to deal with them unless the Lord be on my side.

4. He pleads his own dependence upon God as his portion and happiness. They have their portion in this life, but as for me, *ver. 15.* I am none of them, I have but little of the world, *nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo.* It is the vision and fruition of God that I place my happiness in, that is it I hope for, and comfort myself with the hopes of, and thereby distinguish myself from those that have their portion in this life. Beholding God's face with satisfaction may be considered, (1.) As our duty and comfort in this world. We must in righteousness, clothed with Christ's righteousness, having a good heart, and a good life, by faith behold God's face, and set him always before us; entertain ourselves from day to day with the contemplation of the beauty of the Lord; and when we awake every morning, we must be satisfied with his likeness, set before us in his word, and with his likeness stamped upon us by his renewing grace. Our experience of God's favour to us, and our conformity to him, should yield us more satisfaction than they have, whose belly is filled with the delights of sense. (2.) As our recompence and happiness in the other world; with the prospect of that he concluded the foregoing psalm, and so this. That happiness is prepared and designed only for the righteous, that are justified and sanctified: They shall be put in possession of it when they awake, when the soul awakes at death, out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes at the resurrection, out of its slumber in

in the grave. That blessedness will consist in three things, (1.) The immediate vision of God, and his glory, I shall behold thy face, not as in this world through a glass darkly. The knowledge of God will there be perfected, and the enlarged intellects filled with it. (2.) The participation of his likeness; our holiness will there be perfect. This results from the former, 1 John iii. 2. when he shall appear, we shall therefore be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (3.) A compleat and full satisfaction resulting from all this. I shall be satisfied, abundantly satisfied with it. There is no satisfaction for a soul but in God, and in his face and likeness, his good will towards us, and his good work in us; and even that satisfaction will not be perfect till we come to heaven.

P S A L M XVIII.

This psalm we meet with before in the history of David's life, 2 Sam. xxii. That was the first edition of it, here we have it revived, altered a little, and fitted for the service of the church. It is David's thanksgiving for the many deliverances God had wrought for him, which he desired always to preserve fresh in his own memory, and to diffuse and entail the knowledge of them. It is an admirable composition. The poetry is very fine, the images bold, the expressions lofty, and every word proper and significant; but the piety far exceeds the poetry: Holy faith, and love, and joy, and praise, and hope, are here lively, active, and upon the wing. (1.) He triumphs in God, ver. 1—3. (2.) He magnifies the deliverances God had wrought for him, ver. 4—19. (3.) He takes the comfort of his integrity which God had thereby cleared up, ver. 20—28. (4.) He gives to God the glory of all his achievements, ver. 29—42. (5.) He encourageth himself with the expectation of what God would farther do for him and his, ver. 43—50.

¶ To the chief musician, *A psalm* of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song, in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

1. **I** WILL love thee, O LORD my strength.
2. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 4. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. 5. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. 6. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. 7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. 8. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 9. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. 10. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. 11. He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion round about him, were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. 12. At the brightness that was before him, his thick clouds passed, hail-stones and coals of fire. 13. The LORD also thundred in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail-stones and coals of fire. 14. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. 15. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered: at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. 16. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. 17. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. 18. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. 19. He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The title gives us the occasion of penning this psalm, we had it before, 2 Sam. xxii. 1. only here we are told, that the psalm was delivered, *To the chief musician*, or precentor in the temple songs. Note, The private compositions of good men, designed by them for their own use, may be serviceable to the publick; that others may not only borrow light from their candle, but heat from their fire. Examples sometimes teach better than rules. And David is here called the servant of the Lord, as Moses was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but because with his scepter, with his sword, and with his pen he greatly promoted the interests of God's kingdom in Israel. It was more his honour that he was a servant of the Lord, than that he was king of a great kingdom; and so he himself accounted it; *Psal. cxvi. 16. O Lord, truly I am thy servant.* In these verses;

1. He triumphs in God, and his relation to him. The first words of the psalm; *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength*, are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God, is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience: And this use we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him: This he requires, and will accept; and we are very ungrateful if we grudge him so poor a return. An interest in the person loved, is the lover's delight, this string therefore he touches, and on this he harps with a great deal of pleasure, ver. 2. The Lord, Jehovah, is my God; and then, he is my rock, my fortress, all that which I need, and can desire in my present distress: For there is that in God, which is suited to all the exigencies and occasions of his people that trust in him. He is my rock, and strength, and fortress; that is, (1.) I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties. (2.) I have chosen him to be so, disclaiming all others, and depending upon him alone to protect me. Those that truly love God, may thus triumph in him as theirs; and may with confidence call upon him, ver. 3. This further use we should make of our deliverances, we must not only love God the better, but love prayer the better; call upon him as long as we live, especially in time of trouble, with an assurance, that so we shall be saved; for thus it is written, that *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved*, Acts ii. 21.

2. He sets himself to greatness the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God, and his goodness to us in it.

1. The more imminent and threatening the danger was, out of which we were delivered, the greater is the mercy of the deliverance; David now remembered how the forces of his enemies poured in upon him, which he calls the floods of Belial, sholes of the children of Belial, likely to overpower him with numbers; they surrounded him, compassed him about; they surprized him, and by that means were very near seizing him, their snares prevented him. And when without were fightings, within were fears and sorrows, ver. 4, 5. His spirit was overwhelmed, and he looked upon himself as a gone man, see *Psal. cxvi. 3.*

2. The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David's deliverances were so, ver. 6. David was found a praying man, and God was found a prayer-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall speed as he did. Tho' distress drive us to prayer, God will not therefore be deaf to us; nay, being a God of pity, he will be the more ready to succour us.

3. The more wonderful God's appearances are in any deliverance, the greater it is: Such were the deliverances wrought for David, in which God's manifestation of his presence and glorious attributes is most magnificently described, ver. 7, &c. Little appeared of man, but much of God in these deliverances, 1. He appeared a God of almighty power; for he made the earth shake and tremble, and moved even the foundations of the hills, ver. 7. as of old at mount Sinai. When the men of the earth were struck with fear, then the earth might be said to tremble; when the great men of the earth were put into confusion, then the hills moved. 2. He shewed his anger and displeasure against the enemies and persecutors of his people. He was wroth, ver. 7. His wrath smoked, it burned, it was fire, it was a devouring fire, ver. 8. and coals were kindled by it: Those that by their own sins make themselves as coals, i. e. fuel to this fire, will be consumed by it. He that ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors, sendeth them forth when he pleaseth, and they are sure to hit the mark, and do execution; for those arrows are lightnings, ver. 14. 3. He shewed his readiness to plead his people's cause, and work deliverance for them; for he rode upon a cherub and did fly, for the maintaining of right, and the relieving his distressed servants, ver. 10. No opposition, no obstruction, can be given to him, who rideth upon the wings of the wind, who rides on the heavens for the help of his people; and in his excellency on the skies. 4. He shewed his condescension, in taking cognizance of David's case, he bowed the heavens and came down, ver. 9. did not send an angel, but came himself, as one afflicted in the afflictions of his people.

people. 5. He wrapped himself in darkness, and yet commanded light to shine out of darkness for his people, *Isa. xlv. 15*. He is a God that hideth himself; for he *made darkness his pavilion*, ver. 11. His glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and his proceedings unaccountable, and as so to us, clouds and darkness are round about him; we know not the way that he takes, even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but when his designs are secret, they are kind; for tho' he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. And at his brightness the thick clouds pass, ver. 12. comfort returns, the face of affairs is changed, and that which was gloomy and threatening, becomes serene and pleasant.

4. The greater the difficulties are that lie in the way of deliverance, the more glorious the deliverance is. For the rescuing of David, the waters were to be divided till the very channels were seen; the earth was to be cloven till the very foundations of it were discovered, ver. 15. There were waters deep and many, waters out of which he was to be drawn, ver. 16. as Moses, who from thence had his name, because he was drawn out of the water literally, so David figuratively. His enemies were strong, and they hated him; had he been left to himself, they had been too strong for him, ver. 17. And they were too quick for him; for they prevented him in the day of his calamity, ver. 18. But in the midst of his troubles the Lord was his stay, so that he did not sink. Note, God will not only deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them, and bear them up under their troubles in the mean time.

5. That which especially magnified the deliverance was, that his comfort was the fruit of it, and God's favour was the root and fountain of it. (1.) It was an introduction to his preferment, ver. 19. He brought me forth also out of my straits into a large place, where I had not only room to turn me, but room to thrive. (2.) It was a token of God's favour to him, and that made it doubly sweet; he delivered me, because he delighted in me, not for my merit, but for his own grace and good will. Compare this with 2 Sam. xv. 26. *If he thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am*. We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight God had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well pleased.

In singing this, we must triumph in God, and trust in him: And we may apply it to Christ, the Son of David; the sorrows of death surrounded him, in his distress he prayed, *Heb. v. 7*. God made the earth to shake and tremble, and the rocks to rend, and brought him out in his resurrection into a large place; because he delighted in him, and in his undertaking.

20. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 21. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 23. I was also upright before him: and I kept myself from mine iniquity. 24. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eye-sight. 25. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. 26. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. 27. For thou wilt save the afflicted people: but wilt bring down high looks. 28. For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Here, 1. David reflects with comfort upon his own integrity, and rejoiceth in the testimony of his conscience, that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom, 2 Cor. i. 12. His deliverances were an evidence of this, and this was the great comfort of his deliverances. His enemies had misrepresented him, and perhaps, when his troubles continued long, he began to suspect himself; but when God visibly took his part, he had both the credit and the comfort of his righteousness. (1.) His deliverances cleared his innocence before men, and acquitted him from those crimes which he was falsely accused of. This he calls rewarding him according to his righteousness, ver. 20, 24. i. e. determining the controversy between him and his enemies, according to the justice of his cause, and the cleanness of his hands from that sedition, treason, and rebellion, with which he was charged. He had often appealed to God concerning his innocence, and now God had given judgment upon the appeal (as he always will) according to equity. (2.) They confirmed the testimony of his own conscience for him, which he here reviews with a great deal of pleasure, ver. 21, 22, 23. His own heart knows and is ready to attest it, (1.) That he had kept firm to his duty, and had not departed, not wickedly, not wilfully departed from his God. They that forsake the ways of

the Lord, do in effect depart from their God, and it is a wicked thing to do so. But tho' we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet if we recover ourselves by repentance, and go on in the way of our duty, it shall not be construed a departure; for it is not a wicked departure from our God. (2.) That he had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands, ver. 22. *All his judgments were before me*, and I had a respect to them all, despised none as little, disliked none as hard; but made it my care and business to conform to them all. His statutes I did not put away from me, out of my sight, out of my mind, but kept my eye always upon them, and did not as those, who, because they would quit the ways of the Lord, desire not the knowledge of those ways. (3.) That he had kept himself from his iniquity, and thereby had approved himself upright before God. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which doth most easily beset us, and to mortify the habit of it, will be a good evidence for us that we are upright before God. As David's deliverances cleared his integrity, so did the exaltation of Christ clear his, and for ever roll away the reproach that was cast upon him; and therefore he is said to be justified in the Spirit, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

2. He takes occasion from thence to lay down the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, ver. 25, 26. (1.) Those that shew mercy to others (even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit, no not of their works of mercy, and they) shall find mercy with God, *Matth. v. 7*. (2.) Those that are faithful to their covenants with God, and the relations wherein they stand to him, shall find him all that to them, which he has promised to be. Wherever God finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God. (3.) Those that serve God with a pure conscience, shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, i. e. very sure to be depended on, and very sweet to be delighted in. (4.) Those that resist God, and walk contrary to him, he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, *Lev. xxvi. 21, 24*.

3. From thence he speaks comfort to the humble, *Thou wilt save the afflicted people*, that are wronged, and bear it patiently: Terror to the proud, thou wilt bring down high looks, that aim high, and expect great things for themselves, and look with scorn and disdain upon the poor and pious: And encouragement to himself, *Thou wilt light my candle*, i. e. Thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit, and not leave me melancholy; thou wilt recover me out of my troubles, and restore me to peace and prosperity; thou wilt make my honour bright, which is now eclipsed; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee, and the interests of thy kingdom among men.

Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements, in singing these verses, encourage themselves, that God himself will be a light to them.

29. For by thee I have run through a troop: and by my God have I leaped over a wall. 30. As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. 31. For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? 32. It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. 33. He maketh my feet like hinds feet, and setteth me upon my high places. 34. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 35. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. 36. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; that my feet did not slip. 37. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. 38. I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. 39. For thou hast girded me with strength unto battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. 40. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies: that I might destroy them that hate me. 41. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not. 42. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. 43. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people: and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. 44. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. 45. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. 46. The LORD liveth, and blessed be my rock: and let the

God of my salvation be exalted. 47. *It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.* 48. He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those things that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 49. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen: and sing praises unto thy name. 50. Great deliverance giveth he to his king: and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

In these verses,

1. David looks back with thankfulness upon the great things which God had done for him; he had not only wrought deliverance for him; but had given him victory and success, and made him triumph over those who thought to have triumphed over him. When we set ourselves to praise God for one mercy, we must be led by that to observe the many more, with which we have been compassed about, and followed all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise, in reviewing the several steps by which we have risen to our prosperity. (1.) God had given him all his skill and understanding in military affairs, which he was not bred up to, nor designed for; his genius leading him more to musick and poetry, and a contemplative life: *He teacheth my hands to war*, ver. 34. (2.) God had given him bodily strength to go through the business and fatigue of war; *God girded him with strength*, ver. 32, 39. to that degree, that he could break even a bow of steel, ver. 34. What service God designs men for, he will be sure to fit them for. (3.) God had likewise given him great swiftness, not to flee from the enemies, but to fly upon them, ver. 33. *He maketh my feet like hinds feet*, ver. 36. *Thou hast enlarged my steps under me*, but (whereas those that take large steps are apt to tread awry) my feet did not slip. He was so swift that he pursued his enemies and overtook them, ver. 37. (4.) God had made him very bold and daring in his enterprizes, and given him spirit proportionable to his strength. If a troop stood in his way, he made nothing of running through them; if a wall, he made nothing of leaping over it, ver. 29. If ramparts and bulwarks, he soon mounted them; and by divine assistance set his feet upon the high places of the enemy, ver. 33. (5.) God had protected him, and kept him safe in the midst of the greatest perils; many a time he put his life in his hand, and yet it was wonderfully preserved. *Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation*, ver. 35. and that has compassed me on every side: By that I have been delivered from the strivings of the people, that aimed at my destruction, ver. 43. particularly from the violent man, ver. 48. viz. Saul, who more than once threw a javelin at him. (6.) God had prospered and succeeded him in his designs; he it was that made his way perfect, ver. 32. And it was his right-hand that held him up, ver. 35. (7.) God had given him victory over his enemies, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and all that fought against Israel: those especially he means, yet not excluding the house of Saul, which opposed his coming to the crown, and the partisans of Absalom and Sheba, that would have deposed him. He enlargeth much upon the goodness of God to him in defeating his enemies, attributing his victories not to his own sword or bow, or the valour of his mighty men, but to the favour of God; *I pursued them*, ver. 37. *I wounded them*, ver. 38. *For thou hast girded me with strength*, ver. 39. else I could not have done it. All the praise is ascribed to God, *thou hast subdued them under me*, ver. 39. *Thou hast given me their necks*, ver. 40. not only to trample upon them, as *Josh. x. 24.* but to cut them off. Even those that hated David, whom God loved, and were enemies to the Israel of God, yet in their distress cried unto the Lord, but in vain, he answered them not: How could they expect he should, when it was he they fought against? And when he disowned them (as he will all those that act against his people) no other succours could stand them in stead, *there was none to save them*, ver. 41. Those whom God has abandoned, are easily vanquished, *Then did I beat them small as the dust*, ver. 42. But those whose cause is just, he avengeth, ver. 47. And those whom he favours, will certainly be *lifted up above those that rise up against them*, ver. 48. (8.) God had raised him to the throne, and not only delivered him, and kept him alive, but dignified him, and made him great, ver. 35. *Thy gentleness hath increased me*: Thy discipline and instruction, so some. The good lessons David learned in his affliction, prepared him for the dignity and power that were intended him; and the lessening of him helped very much to greaten him. God made him not only a great conqueror, but a great ruler; *Thou hast made me the head of the heathen*, ver. 43. all the neighbour nations were tributaries to him. See 2 Sam. viii. 6, 11. In all this David was a type of Christ, whom the Father brought safely thro' his conflicts with the powers of darkness, and made victorious over them, and gave to be head over all things to his church, which is his body.

2. David looks up with humble and reverent adorations of the divine glory and perfection; when God had by his provi-

dence magnified him, he endeavours with his praises to magnify God, to bless him, and exalt him, ver. 46. He gives honour to him, (1.) As a living God, *the Lord liveth*, ver. 46. We had our lives at first from, and we owe the continuance of them to that God, who has life in himself, and is therefore fitly called, the living God: The gods of the heathen were dead gods; the best friends we have among men, are dying friends; but God lives, lives for ever, and will not fail those that trust in him, but because he lives, they shall live also; for he is their life. (2.) As a finishing God: As for God, he is not only perfect himself, but *his way is perfect*, ver. 30. He is known by his name Jehovah, *Exod. vi. 3.* a God performing and perfecting what he begins, in providence as well as creation, *Gen. ii. 1.* If it was God that made David's way perfect, ver. 32. much more is his own so. There is no flaw in God's works, nor any fault to be found with what he doth, *Eccles. iii. 14.* And what he undertakes he will go through with, whatever difficulties lie in the way; what God begins to build, he is able to finish. (3.) As a faithful God: *The word of the Lord is tried*: I have tried it (saith David) and it has not failed me; all the saints in all ages have tried it, and it never failed any that trusted in it. It is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mixture and alloy, as lessen the value of mens words. David, in God's providences concerning him, takes notice of the performance of his promises to him, which, as it puts sweetness into the providence, so it puts honour upon the promise. (4.) As the protector and defender of his people. David had found him so to him, he is the *God of my salvation*, ver. 46. by whose power and grace I am, and hope to be saved: But not of mine only, he is *a buckler to all those that trust in him*, ver. 30. He shelters and protects them all, is both able and ready to do so. (5.) As a non-such in all this, ver. 31. There is a God, and who is God, save Jehovah? That God is a rock for the support and shelter of his faithful worshippers, and who is a rock, save our God? Thus he not only gives glory to God, but encourages his own faith in him. Note, (1.) Whoever pretend to be deities, it is certain, there is none God, save the Lord, all others are counterfeits, *Isa. xlv. 8.* *Jer. x. 10.* (2.) Whoever pretend to be our felicities, there is no rock, save our God; none that we can depend upon to make us happy.

3. David looks forward, with a believing hope that God would still do him good. He promiseth himself (1.) That his enemies should be compleatly subdued, and those of them that yet remain should be made his footstool. That his government should be extensive, so that even a people whom he had not known should serve him, ver. 43. That his conquests, and consequently his acquisitions, should be easy; *As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me*, ver. 44. And that his enemies should be convinced, that it was to no purpose to oppose him; even those that are retired to their fastnesses, shall not trust to them, but be afraid out of their close places, having seen so much of David's wisdom, courage, and success. Thus the Son of David, tho' he sees not yet all things put under him, yet knows he shall reign till all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be quite put down.

(2.) That his seed should be for ever continued in the Messiah, who he forefaw should come from his loins, ver. 50. He sheweth mercy to his anointed, his Messiah, to David himself, the anointed of the God of Jacob in the type, and to his seed for evermore: *He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but to his seed, as of one, that is Christ*, Gal. iii. 16. It is he only that shall reign for ever, and of the increase of whose government and peace, there shall be no end. Christ is called David, *Hos. iii. 5.* God has called him his king, *Psal. ii. 6.* Great deliverance doth God give, and will he give to him, and to his church and people, here called his seed for evermore.

And in singing these verses, we must give God the glory of the victories of Christ and his church hitherto, and all the deliverances and advancements of the gospel kingdom; and encourage ourselves, and one another with an assurance, that the church militant, will be shortly triumphant, will be eternally so.

P S A L M XIX.

There are two excellent books, which the great God hath published for the instruction and edification of the children of men, and this psalm treats of them both, and recommends them both to our diligent study. 1. The book of the creatures, in which we may easily read the power and Godhead of the Creator, ver. 1—6. 2. The book of the scriptures, which makes known to us the will of God concerning our duty: He shews the excellency and usefulness of that book, ver. 7—11. And then teacheth us how to improve it, ver. 12—14.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE heavens declare the glory of God : and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. 2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3. *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.* 4. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world : in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, 5. Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. 6. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it : and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

From the things that are seen every day by all the world, the psalmist in these verses leads us to the consideration of the invisible things of God, whose being appears incontestibly evident, and whose glory shines transcendently bright in the visible heavens, the structure and beauty of them, and the order and influence of the heavenly bodies. This instance of the divine power, serves not only to shew the folly of atheists, who see there is a heaven, and yet say, There is no God ; who see the effect, and yet say, there is no cause ; but to shew the folly of idolaters also, and the vanity of their imagination ; who, tho' the heavens declare the glory of God, yet gave that glory to the lights of heaven, which those very lights directed them to give to God only, the Father of lights. Now observe here,

1. What that is which the creatures notify to us : They are many ways useful and serviceable to us, but in nothing so much as in this, that they declare the glory of God, by shewing his handy-works, *ver. 1.* They plainly speak themselves to be God's handy-works ; for they could not exist from eternity, all succession and motion must have had a beginning ; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction ; they could not be produced by a casual hit of atoms, that is an absurdity, fit rather to be bantered than reasoned with : Therefore they must have a Creator, who can be no other than an eternal mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Thus it appears they are God's works, the *work of his fingers*, Psal. viii. 2. and therefore they declare his glory. From the excellency of the work, we may easily infer the infinite perfection of its great author. From the brightness of the heavens, we may collect that the Creator is light ; their vastness of extent speaks his immensity ; their height his transcendency and sovereignty ; their influence upon this earth, his dominion and providence, and universal beneficence : And all declare his almighty power, by which they were at first made, and continue to this day, according to the ordinances that were then settled.

2. What are some of those things which do notify this ?

(1.) The heavens and the firmament: The vast expanse of air and æther, and the spheres of the planets, and fixed stars. Man has this advantage above the beasts, in the structure of his body, that whereas they are made to look downward, as their spirits must go ; he is made erect to look upwards, because upwards his spirit must shortly go, and his thoughts should now rise.

(2.) The constant and regular succession of day and night, *ver. 2.* Day unto day, and night unto night, speak the glory of that God, who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has from the beginning to this day, preserved that established order without variation, according to God's covenant with Noah, *Gen. viii. 22.* That while the earth remains, day and night shall not cease ; to which covenant of providence, the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, *Jer. xxxiii. 20.—xxxii. 35.* The counterchanging of day and night in so exact a method, is a great instance of the power of God, and calls us to observe, that as in the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, he forms the light, and creates the darkness, *Isa. xlv. 7.* and sets the one over against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to man, for he makes the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice, *Psal. lxxv. 8.* Not only glorifies himself, but gratifies us by this constant revolution ; for as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night ; every day and every night speaks the goodness of God, and when it has finished its testimony, leaves it to the next day, to the next night, to say the same.

(3.) The light and influence of the sun doth in a special manner declare the glory of God ; for of all the heavenly bodies, that is the most conspicuous in itself, and most useful to this lower world, which would be all dungeon, and all desert without it. It is not an improbable conjecture, that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun in view, and from the brightness of it, took occasion to declare the glory of God. Concerning the sun, observe here, (1.) The place appointed him : In the heavens God hath set a tabernacle for the sun. The heavenly bodies called hosts of heaven, and therefore are fitly said to dwell in tents, as soldiers in their encampments : The sun is said to have a ta-

bernacle set him, not only because he is in continual motion, and never has a fixed residence ; but because the mansion he has, will at the end of time be taken down like a tent, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the sun shall be turned into darkness. (2.) The course assigned him : That glorious creature was not made to be idle, but his going forth (at least, as it appears to our eye) is from one point of the heavens, and his circuit from thence to the opposite point, and thence, to compleat his diurnal revolution, to the same point again ; and this with such steadiness and constancy, that we can certainly foretell what hour and what minute the sun will rise at such a place any day to come. (3.) The brightness wherein he appears : He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, richly dressed up and adorned, as fine as hands can make him, looking pleasantly himself, and making all about him pleasant ; for the friend of the bridegroom rejoiceth greatly to hear the bridegrooms voice, *John iii. 29.* (4.) The cheerfulness wherewith he makes his tour : Tho' it seems a vast round he has to walk, and he has not a moment's rest, yet in obedience to the law of his creation, and for the service of man, he not only doth it, but doth it with a great deal of pleasure, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. With such satisfaction did Christ the sun of righteousness finish the work that was given him to do. (5.) His universal influence on this earth : There is nothing hid from the heat thereof, no not metals in the bowels of the earth, which the sun has an influence upon.

3. To whom this declaration is made of the glory of God ; it is made to all parts of the world, *ver. 3, 4.* *There is no speech nor language, (i. e. no nation, for the nations were divided after their tongues, Gen. x. 32.) where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone through all the earth, (the equinoctial line suppose) and with it, their words to the end of the world, proclaiming the eternal power of the God of nature, ver. 4.* The apostle useth this as a reason, why the Jews should not be angry with him and others for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without witness among them, *Rom. x. 18.* so that they were without excuse if they were idolaters, *Rom. i. 20, 21.* And those were without blame that by preaching the gospel to them, endeavoured to turn them from their idolatry. If God used these means to prevent their apostasy, and they proved ineffectual, the apostles did well to use other means to recover them from it. They have no speech or language, (so some read it) and yet their voice is heard. All people may hear these natural immortal preachers speak to them in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God.

And in singing these verses, we must give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the sun of righteousness.

7. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul : the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightning the eyes. 9. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever : the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. 11. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned : and in keeping of them there is great reward. 12. Who can understand his errors ? cleanse thou me from secret faults. 13. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me : then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. 14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.

God's glory, that is his goodness to man, appears much in the works of creation, but much more in and by divine revelation. The holy scripture, as it is a rule both of our duty to God, and of our expectation from him, is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works, might have served, if man had retained his integrity ; but to recover him out of his fallen state, another course must be taken ; that must be done by the word of God. And here,

1. The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God, in six sentences, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* in each of which the name Jehovah is repeated, and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority, and all its excellency from the law-maker. Here are six several titles of the word of God, to take in the whole of divine revelation, precepts and promises, and especially the gospel. Here are several good properties of it which prove its divine original, which recommend it to our affection,

affection, and which extol it above all other laws whatsoever; and here are several good effects of the law upon the minds of men, which shew what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of divine grace is, going along with it, and working by it.

1. The law of the Lord is perfect, it is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and perfectly fitted for the end for which it is designed; it will make the man of God perfect, 2 Tim. iii. 17. Nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it. It is of use to convert the soul, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty, for it shews us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God, and the indispensable necessity of our return to him.

2. The testimony of the Lord (which witnesseth for him to us) is sure, incontestibly and inviolably sure, what we may give credit to, may rely upon, and may be confident it will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure fountain of living comforts, and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. It is of use to make us wise, wise to salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. It will give us an insight into things divine, and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work, and secure to us our true interests. It will make even the simple wise, for their souls and eternity, who yet are no conjurers (as we say) for this world. Those that are humbly simple, i. e. sensible of their own folly, and willing to be taught, those shall be made wise by the word of God, Psal. xxv. 9.

3. The statutes of the Lord (enacted by his authority, and binding to all wherever they come) they are right, exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil; that is, with the right reason of man, and the right counsels of God. All God's precepts concerning all things, are right, Psal. cxix. 128. just as they should be, and they will set us to rights if we receive them, and submit to them: And because they are right, they rejoice the heart. The law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy. And when it is written in our hearts, it lays a foundation for lasting joy, by restoring us to our right mind.

4. The commandment of the Lord is pure: It is clear without darkness, it is clean without dross and defilement. It is itself purified from all alloy, and is purifying to those that receive and embrace it. It is the ordinary means which the Spirit useth in enlightening the eyes; it bring us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty.

5. The fear of the Lord, i. e. true religion and godliness prescribed in the word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life, it is clean, clean itself, and it will make us clean, Job. xv. 3. it will cleanse our way, Psal. cxix. 9. And it endureth for ever, i. e. it is of perpetual obligation, and can never be repealed; the ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God is ever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil.

6. The judgments of the Lord, all his precepts, which are framed in infinite wisdom, they are true, they are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are righteous, all consonant to natural equity, and they are so altogether, there is no unrighteousness in any of them, but they are all of a piece.

2. He expresseth the great value he had for the word of God, and the great advantage he had, and hoped to have by it ver. 10, 11.

1. See how highly he prized the commandments of God; it is the character of all good people, that they prefer their religion and the word of God. (1.) Far before all the wealth of the world; it is more desirable than gold, than fine gold, than much fine gold. Gold is of the earth, earthly, but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body, and the concerns of time, but grace is for the soul, and the concerns of eternity. (2.) Far before all the pleasures and delights of sense. The word of God received by faith, is sweet to the soul, sweeter than hony, and the hony-comb. The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore debase the great soul of man, the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

2. See what use he made of the precepts of God's word, by them is thy servant warned. The word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns us of the duty we are to do, the danger we are to avoid, and the deluge we are to prepare for, Ezek. iii. 17.—xxxiii. 7. It warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. And all that are indeed God's servants take this warning.

3. See what advantages he promised himself by his obedience to God's precepts, "In keeping of them there is great reward." Those that make conscience of their duty, will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward not only after keeping, but in keeping God's commandments; a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Religion is health and honour, it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet,

and our crosses easy, life truly valuable, and death itself truly desirable.

3. He draws some good inferences from this pious meditation upon the excellency of the word of God. Such thoughts as these should excite in us devout affections, and then they are to good purpose.

1. He takes occasion from hence to make a penitent reflection upon his sins; for *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. Is the commandment thus holy, just, and good, then who can understand his errors! I cannot, whoever can. From the rectitude of the divine law he learns to call his sins his errors; if the commandment be true and righteous, every transgression of the commandment is an error, as grounded upon a mistake; every wicked practice takes rise from some corrupt principle, it is a deviation from the rule we are to work by, the way we are to walk in. From the extent, and strictness, and spiritual nature of the divine law, he learns that his sins are so many, that he cannot understand the number of them, and so exceeding sinful, that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. We are guilty of many sins, which, through our carelessness and partiality to ourselves, we are not aware of: Many we have been guilty of, which we have forgotten; so that when we have been never so particular in the confession of sin, we must conclude with an *Et cætera*, and such like: for God knows a great deal more evil by us, than we do by ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how oft he offends. It is well we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

2. He takes occasion from hence to pray against sin; all the discoveries of sin made us by the law, should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray as David doth here.

(1.) For mercy to pardon; finding himself unable to instance in all the particulars of his transgressions, he cries out, *Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults*; not secret to God, so none are; nor only such as are secret to the world, but such as were hid from his own observation of himself. The best of men have reason to suspect themselves guilty of many secret faults, and to pray to God to cleanse them from that guilt, and not to lay it to their charge; for even our sins of infirmity and inadvertency, and our secret sins, would be our ruin, if God should deal with us according to the desert of them. Even secret faults are defiling, and render us unfit for communion with God, but when they are pardoned, we are cleansed from them, 1 John i. 7.

(2.) For grace to help in time of need: Having prayed, that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays, that presumptuous sins might be prevented, ver. 13. All that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are in care not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly, as appears by their prayers which concur with David here. Where observe, (1.) His petition; keep me from ever being guilty of a wilful presumptuous sin; we ought to pray that we may be kept from sins of infirmity, but especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God, and wound conscience, which wither our comforts and shock our hopes. However, let none such have dominion over me, let me not be at the command of any such sin, nor be captive by it. (2.) His plea: so shall I be upright, i. e. I shall appear myself upright; I shall preserve the evidence and comfort of my uprightness; and I shall be innocent from the great transgression, so he calls a presumptuous sin, because no sacrifice was accepted for it, Numb. xv. 28, 29, 30. Note, 1. Presumptuous sins are very heinous and dangerous: Those that sin against the habitual convictions, and actual admonitions of their own consciences, in contempt and defiance of the law and its sanctions, that sin with a high hand, they sin presumptuously, and it is a great transgression. 2. Even good men ought to be jealous of themselves, and afraid of sinning presumptuously, yea, though through the grace of God they have hitherto been kept from them. Let none be high-minded but fear. 3. Being so much exposed, we have great need to pray to God, when we are pushing forwards towards a presumptuous sin, to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing the temptation, or by his grace giving us victory over it.

3. He takes occasion humbly to beg the divine acceptance of those his pious thoughts and affections, ver. 14. Observe the connexion of this with what goes before: He prays to God to keep him from sin, and then begs he would accept his performances, for if we favour our sins, we cannot expect God should favour us or our services, Psal. lxxvi. 18. Observe, (1.) What his services were, the words of his mouth, and the meditations of his heart, i. e. his holy affections offered up to God. The pious meditations of the heart must not be smothered, but expressed in the words of our mouth, for God's glory and the edification of others; and the words of our mouth in prayer and praise, must not be formal, but arising from the meditation of the heart, Psal. xlv. 1. (2.) What was his care concerning these services, that they might be acceptable with God, else what do they avail us? Gracious souls have all they aim at, if they be accepted of God, for that is their bliss. (3.) What encouragement he had to hope for this, because God was his strength and his redeemer. If we seek assistance from God as our strength in our religious duties, we

we may hope to find acceptance with God of our duties; for by his strength we have power with him.

In singing this, we should get our hearts much affected with the excellency of the word of God, and delivered into it, and much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it, and the danger we are in by it, and fetch in help from heaven against it.

P S A L M XX.

It is the will of God, that prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, should be made, in a special manner, for kings and all in authority: This psalm is a prayer, and the next a thanksgiving for the king; David was a martial prince, much in war. Either this psalm was penned upon occasion of some particular expedition of his, or, in general, as a form to be used in the daily service of the church for him. In this psalm we may observe, (1.) What it is they beg of God for the king, ver. 1—4. (2.) With what assurance they beg it. The people triumph, ver. 5. The prince, ver. 6. Both together, ver. 7, 8. And so he concludes with a prayer to God for audience, ver. 9. In this David may well be looked upon as a type of Christ, to whose kingdom and its interests among men, the church was in every age a hearty well-wisher.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE LORD hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.
2. Send thee help from the sanctuary: and strengthen thee out of Zion.
3. Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifice. Selah.
4. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.
5. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

This prayer for David is entitled, a psalm of David; nor was it any absurdity at all for him, who was divinely inspired, to draw up a directory or form of prayer to be used in the congregation for himself, and those in authority under him; nay, it is very proper for those who desire the prayers of their friends, to tell them particularly what they would have to be asked of God for them. Note, Even great and good men, and those that know never so well how to pray for themselves, yet must not despise, but earnestly desire the prayers of others for them, even those that are their inferiors in all respects. Paul often begged of his friends to pray for him. Magistrates and those in power ought to esteem and encourage praying people to reckon them their strength, *Zach. xii. 5, 10.* and to do what they can for them, that they may have an interest in their prayers, and may do nothing to forfeit it. Now observe here,

1. What it is that they are taught to ask of God for the king.

(1.) That God would answer his prayers. *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, ver. 1. and the Lord fulfil all thy petitions, ver. 5.* Note, (1.) Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. It was often a day of trouble with David himself, of disappointment and distress, of treading down, and of perplexity. Neither the crown on his head, nor the grace in his heart would exempt him from trouble. (2.) Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. David, tho' a man of business, a man of war, yet was constant to his devotions; tho' he had prophets and priests, and many good people among his subjects to pray for him, yet he did not think that excused him from praying for himself. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or of their ministers or friends, for them who are capable of praying for themselves, and yet neglect it. The prayers of others for us must be desired not to supersede, but to second, our own for our ourselves. Happy the people that have praying princes, to whose prayers they may thus say, *Amen.*

(2.) That God would protect his person, and preserve his life in the perils of war. *The name of the God of Jacob defend thee, and set thee out of the reach of the enemies. (1.) Let God by his providence keep thee safe, even the God who preserved Jacob in the days of his trouble. David had mighty men for his guards, but he commits himself, and his people commit him, to the care of the almighty God. (2.) Let God by his grace keep thee easy from the fear of evil, Prov. xviii. 10. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous run by faith and are safe; let David be enabled to shelter himself in that strong tower, as he has done many a time.*

(3.) That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the publick good; that in the day of battle he would send him help out of the sanctuary, and strength out of Zion, not from common providence, but from the ark of the covenant, and the peculiar favour God bears to his chosen people Israel. That he would help him in performance of the promises, and in answer to the prayers made in the sanctuary. Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the tokens of God's peculiar love; the blessing of God even our own God. Strength out of Zion is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that is it we should most desire both for ourselves and others, in services and sufferings.

(4.) That God would testify his gracious acceptance of the sacrifices he offered with his prayers, according to the law of that time, before he went out on this dangerous expedition. *The Lord remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-offerings, ver. 3.* or, turn them to ashes, i. e. the Lord give thee the victory and success, which thou didst by prayer, with sacrifices, ask of him, and thereby give as full proof of his acceptance of the sacrifice, as ever he did by kindling it with fire from heaven. By this we may now know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and divine affection, and with that makes our hearts burn within us.

(5.) That God would crown all his enterprizes and noble designs for the publick welfare, with the desired success, *ver. 4. The Lord grant thee according to thine own heart.* This they might in faith pray for, because they knew David was a man after God's own heart, and would design nothing but what was pleasing to him. Those who make it their business to glorify God, may expect that God will one way or other gratify them; and they who walk in his counsel, may promise themselves that he will fulfil theirs. *Thou shalt devise a thing, and it shall be established unto thee.*

2. What confidence they had of an answer of peace to these petitions, for themselves and their good king, *ver. 5. We will rejoice in thy salvation.* We that are subjects will rejoice in the preservation and prosperity of our prince; or rather, in thy salvation, O God, in thy power and promise to save will we rejoice, that is it we depend upon now, and which in the issue we shall have occasion greatly to rejoice in. Those that have their eye still upon the salvation of the Lord, shall have their hearts filled with the joy of that salvation. *In the name of our God will we set up our banners. (1.) We will wage war in his name, we will see that our cause be good, and make his glory our end in every expedition; we will ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; we will follow his conduct, implore his aid, and depend upon it, and refer the issue to him. David went against Goliath, in the name of the Lord of hosts, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. (2.) We will celebrate our victories in his name. When we lift up our banners in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be in the name of our God, he shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honour that is due to him.*

In singing this, we ought to offer up to God our hearty good wishes to the good government we are under, and to the prosperity of it. But we may look farther; these prayers for David are prophecies concerning Christ the Son of David; and in him they were abundantly answered, he undertook the work of our redemption, and made war upon the powers of darkness; in the day of trouble, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful the Lord heard him, heard him in that he feared, *Heb. v. 7. Sent him help out of the sanctuary, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him, took cognizance of his offering, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and accepted his burnt-sacrifice, turned it to ashes, the fire that should have fastned upon the sinner, fastning upon the sacrifice, with which God was well-pleased. And he granted him according to his own heart, made him to see of the travel of his soul to his satisfaction, prospered his good pleasure in his hand, fulfilled all his petitions for himself and us, for him the Father heareth always, and his intercession is ever prevailing.*

6. Now know I, that the LORD saveth his anointed: he will hear him from his holy heaven, with the saving strength of his right hand. 7. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. 8. They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright. 9. Save LORD, let the King hear us when we call.

Here is, 1. Holy David himself triumphing in the interest he had in the prayers of good people, *ver. 6. Now know I (I that pen the psalm know it) that the Lord saveth his anointed, because he hath stirred up the hearts of the seed of Jacob to pray for him. Note, It bodes well to any prince and people, and may justly be taken as a happy presage, when God pours upon them a spirit of prayer. If he see us seeking him, he will be found of us; if he cause us to hope in his word, he will establish*

establish his word to us. Now so many that have an interest in heaven are praying for him, he doubts not but that God will hear him, and grant him an answer of peace; which will, (1.) Take its rise from above, he will hear him from his holy heaven, of which the sanctuary was a type, *Heb. ix. 23*: from the throne he hath prepared in heaven, of which the mercy-seat was a type. (2.) It shall take its effect here below. He will hear him with the saving strength of his right hand, *i. e.* he will give a real answer to his prayers, and the prayers of his friends for him, not by letter, or by word of mouth, but, which is much better, by his right hand, by the saving strength of his right hand. He will make it to appear he hears him by what he doth for him.

2. His people triumphing in God, and their relation to him, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world. (1.) See the difference between worldly people and godly people in their confidences, *ver. 7*. The children of this world trust in second causes, and think all is well if those do but smile upon them, they trust in chariots and in horses, and the more of them they can bring into the field, the more sure they are of success in their wars; probably, David has here an eye to the Syrians, whose forces consisted much of chariots and horsemen, as we find in the history of David's victories over them, *2 Sam. viii. 4—x. 18*. But, say the Israelites, we neither have chariots and horses to trust to, nor do we want them, nor if we had them would we build our hopes of success upon that, but we will remember, and rely upon the name of the Lord our God; upon the relation we stand in to him as the Lord our God, and the knowledge we have of him by his name, *i. e.* all that whereby he makes himself known, this we will remember, and upon every remembrance of it will be encouraged. Note, Those who make God and his name their praise, may make God and his name their trust. (2.) See the difference in the issue of their confidences, and by that we are to judge of the wisdom of the choice; things are as they prove; see who will be ashamed of their confidence, and who not, *ver. 8*. They that trust in their chariots and horses, are brought down and fallen, and their chariots and horses were so far from saving them, that they helped to sink them, and made them the easier and the richer prey to the conqueror, *2 Sam. viii. 4*. But we that trust in the name of the Lord our God, not only stand upright and keep our ground, but are risen and have got ground against the enemy, and have triumphed over them. Note, A believing obedient trust in God, and his name, is the surest way both to preferment and to establishment, to rise, and to stand upright, and this will stand us in stead when creature confidences fail those that depend upon them.

3. They conclude their prayer for the king, with an hosanna, save now we beseech thee O Lord! *ver. 9*. As we read this verse, it may be taken as a prayer, that God would not only bless the king, save Lord, give him success; but that he would make him a blessing to them, let the king hear us, when we call to him for justice and mercy. Those that would have good of their magistrates must thus pray for them, for they, as all other creatures, are that to us (and no more) that God makes them to be. Or, it may refer to the Messiah, that King, that King of kings; let him hear us when we call; let him come to us according to the promise in the time appointed; let him, as the great master of requests, receive all our petitions, and present them to his Father. But many interpreters give another reading of this verse, by altering the pause, *Lord save the king, and hear us when we call*; and so it is a summary of the whole psalm, and is taken into our English liturgy, *O Lord save the king, and mercifully hear us when we call upon thee*.

In singing these verses we should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.

P S A L M XXI.

As the foregoing psalm was a prayer for the king, that God would protect and prosper him; so this is a thanksgiving for the success God had blessed him with. Those whom we have prayed for, we ought to give thanks for, and particularly for kings in whose prosperity we share. They are here taught, (1.) To congratulate his victories, and the honour he had achieved, *ver. 1—6*. (2.) To confide in the power of God for the completing of the ruin of the enemies of his kingdom, *ver. 7—13*. And in this there is an eye to the Messiah, the prince and the glory of his kingdom; for to him divers passages in this psalm are more applicable, than to David himself.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! 2. Thou hast given him his hearts desire, and

hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. 3. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. 4. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. 5. His glory is great in thy salvation, honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. 6. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

David here speaks for himself in the first place, professing that his joy was in God's strength, and in his salvation, and not in the strength or success of his armies. He also directs his subjects herein to rejoice with him, and to give God all the glory of the victories he had obtained, and all with an eye to Christ, of whose triumphs over the powers of darkness, David's victories were but shadows.

1. They here congratulate the king's joys, and concur with him in them, *ver. 1*. the king doth rejoice, he useth to rejoice in thy strength, and so do we, what pleaseth the king pleaseth us, *2 Sam. iii. 36*. Happy the people, the character of whose king it is, that he makes God's strength his confidence, and God's salvation his joy; that is pleased with all the advancements of God's kingdom, and trusts God to bear him out in all he doth for the service of it. Our Lord Jesus in his great undertaking relied upon help from heaven, and pleased himself with the prospect of that great salvation which he was thereby to work out.

2. They give God all the praise of those things, which were the matter of their king's rejoicing.

1. That God had heard his prayers, *ver. 2*. *Thou hast given him his hearts desire*, (and there is no prayer accepted but what is the heart's desire) the very thing they begged of God for him, *Psal. xx. 4*. Note, God's gracious returns of prayer do in a special manner require our humble returns of praise. When God gives to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, gives him to see his seed, and accepts his intercession for all believers, he gives him his heart's desire.

2. That God had surprised him with favours, and much out-done his expectations, *ver. 3*. *Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness*. All our blessings are blessings of goodness, and are owing not at all to any merit of ours, but purely and only to God's goodness. But the psalmist here reckons it in a special manner obliging, that these blessings were given in a preventing way; this fixed his eye, enlarged his soul, and endeared his God; as one expresseth it. When God's blessings come sooner, and prove richer than we imagine, when they are given before we prayed for them, before we were ready for them, nay, when we fear the contrary; then it may be truly said, that he prevented us with them. Nothing indeed prevented Christ, but to mankind never was any favour more preventing than our redemption by Christ, and all the blessed fruits of his mediation.

3. That God had advanced him to the highest honour, and the most extensive power, *Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head*, and kept it there, when his enemies attempted to throw it off. Note, Crowns are at God's dispose; no head wears them, but God sets them there, whether in judgment to his land, or for mercy, the event will shew. On the head of Christ, God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first, and then of glory.

4. That God had assured him of the perpetuity of his kingdom, and therein had done more for him, than he was able either to ask or think, *ver. 4*. When he went forth upon a perilous expedition, he asked his life of thee, which he then put into his hand, and thou not only gavest him that, but withal gavest him length of days for ever and ever: didst not only prolong his life far beyond his expectation, but didst assure him of a blessed immortality in a future state, and of the continuance of his kingdom in the Messiah, that should come of his loins. See how God's grants often exceed our petitions and hopes, and infer from thence, how rich he is in mercy to those that call upon him. See also, and rejoice in the length of the days of Christ's kingdom: He was dead indeed, that we might live thro' him; but he is alive, and lives for evermore, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; and because he thus lives, we shall thus live also.

5. That God had advanced him to the highest honour and dignity, *ver. 5*. *His glory is great*, far transcending that of all the neighbouring princes, in the salvation thou hast wrought for him, and wrought by him. The glory which every good man is ambitious of, is to see the salvation of the Lord, *honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him*, as a burthen which he must bear, as a charge which he must account for. Jesus Christ received from God the Father honour and glory, *2 Pet. i. 17*. The glory which he had with him before the worlds were, *John xvii. 5*. And on him is laid the charge of an universal government, and to him all power in heaven and earth is committed.

6. That

6. That God had given him the satisfaction of being the author of all bliss to mankind, *ver. 6. Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever*, (so the margin reads it) thou hast made him to be an universal, everlasting, blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are and shall be blessed; and so thou hast made him exceeding glad, with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking, and to him in the prosecution of it. See how the spirit of prophecy gradually riseth here to that which is peculiar to Christ, for none but he is blessed for ever, much less a blessing for ever, to that eminency that the expression speaks: And of him it is said, that God made him full of joy with his countenance.

And in singing this, we should rejoice in his joy, and triumph in his exaltation.

7. For the king trusted in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved. 8. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. 10. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. 11. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. 12. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings, against the face of them. 13. Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

The psalmist having taught his people to look back with joy and praise, on what God had done for him and them; here teacheth them to look forward with faith, and hope, and prayer, upon what God would further do for them. *The king rejoiceth in God, ver. 1.* and therefore we will be thankful; *the king trusteth in God, ver. 7.* therefore will we be encouraged. The joy and confidence of Christ, our king, is the ground of all our joy and confidence.

1. They are confident of the stability of David's kingdom: *Through the mercy of the most High*, and not through his own merit or strength, *he shall not be moved*. His prosperous state shall not be disturbed, his faith and hope in God, which is the stay of his spirit, shall not be shaken. The mercy of the most High, the divine goodness, power, and dominion, is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears. God being at Christ's right hand in his sufferings, *Psal. xvi. 8.* and he being at God's right hand in his glory, we may be sure he shall not, he cannot be moved, but continueth ever.

2. They are confident of the destruction of all the impenitent, implacable enemies of David's kingdom. The success with which God had blessed David's arms hitherto, was an earnest of the rest which God would give him from all his enemies round about; and a type of the total overthrow of all Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them. Observe, (1.) The description of his enemies: They are such as hate him, *ver. 8.* They hated David because God had set him apart for himself; hated Christ because they hated the light; but both were hated without any just cause, and in both God was hated, *John xv. 23, 25.* (2.) The designs of his enemies, *ver. 11.* *They intended evil against thee, and imagined a mischievous device*; they pretended to fight against David only, but their enmity was against God himself. They that aimed to un-king David, aimed in effect to un-God Jehovah. What is devised and designed against religion, and against the instruments God raiseth up to support and advance it, is very evil and mischievous, and God takes it as devised and designed against himself, and will so reckon for it. (3.) The disappointment of them: They devise what they are not able to perform, *ver. 11.* Their malice is impotent, and they imagine a vain thing, *Psal. ii. 1.* (4.) The discovery of them, *ver. 8.* *Thy hand shall find them out*, tho' never so artfully disguised by the pretences and professions of friendship; tho' mingled with the faithful subjects of this kingdom, and hardly to be distinguished from them; tho' flying from justice, and absconding in their high places; yet thy hand shall find them out wherever they are. There is no escaping God's avenging eye, no going out of the reach of his hand; rocks and mountains will be no better shelter at last, than fig-leaves were at first. (5.) The destruction of them: It will be an utter destruction, *Luke xix. 27.* they shall be swallowed up and devoured, *ver. 9.* Hell, the portion of all Christ's enemies, is the compleat misery both of body and soul. *Their fruit and their seed shall be destroyed, ver. 10.* The enemies of God's kingdom in every age shall fall under the same doom, and the whole generation of them will at last be rooted out, and all opposing rule, principality and power shall be put down. The arrows of God's wrath shall confound them,

and put them to flight; being levelled at the face of them, *ver. 12.* That will be the lot of daring enemies that face God. The fire of God's wrath will consume them, *ver. 9.* they shall not only be cast into a furnace of fire, *Matth. xiii. 42.* but he shall make them themselves as a fiery oven or furnace; they shall be their own tormentors, the reflections and terrors of their own consciences will be their hell. Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected him, and fought against him, even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them to eternity a fiery oven to themselves: It is the worm that dies not.

3. In this confidence they beg of God, that he would still appear for his anointed, *ver. 13.* that he would act for him in his own strength, by the immediate operations of his power as Lord of hosts, and Father of spirits, making little use of means and instruments. And (1.) Hereby he would exalt himself, and glorify his own name. We have but little strength, and are not so active for thee as we should be, which is our shame; Lord take the work into thine own hands, do it without us, and it will be thy glory. (2.) Hereupon they would exalt him; so will we sing and praise thy power the more triumphantly. The less God has of our service, when a deliverance is in the working, the more he must have of our praises, when it is wrought without us.

P S A L M XXII.

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, as clearly and fully as any where else in all the Old Testament, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. of him, no doubt David here speaks, and not of himself, or of any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament, all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. The providences of God concerning David were so very extraordinary, that we may suppose there were some wise and good men, who then could not but look upon him as a figure of him that was to come. But the composition of his psalms especially, in which he found himself wonderfully carried out by the spirit of prophecy, far beyond his own thought and intention, was (we may suppose) an abundant satisfaction to himself, that he was not only a father of the Messiah, but figure of him. In this psalm he speaks (1.) Of the humiliation of Christ, ver. 1—21. Where David, as a type of Christ, complains of the very calamitous condition he was in upon many accounts. (1.) He complains, and mixeth comforts with his complaints. Complains, ver. 1, 2. But comforts himself, ver. 3—5. Complains again, ver. 6—8. But comforts himself again, ver. 9, 10. (2.) He complains, and mixeth prayers with his complaints. Complains of the power and rage of his enemies, ver. 12, 13, 16, 18. Of his own bodily weakness and decay, ver. 14, 15, 17. But prays that God would not be far from him, ver. 11, 19. That he would save and deliver him, 19—21. (2.) Of the exaltation of Christ, that his undertaking should be for the glory of God, ver. 22—25. For the salvation and joy of his people, ver. 26—29. And for the perpetuating of his own kingdom, ver. 30, 31. In singing this psalm, we must keep our thoughts fixed upon Christ, and be so affected with his sufferings, as to experience the fellowship of them, and so affected with his grace, as to experience the power and influence of it.

¶ To the chief musician upon Ajeleth Shazar,
A psalm of David.

1. **M**Y God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roling? 2. O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. 3. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. 4. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. 6. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. 7. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8. He trusted on the LORD, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. 9. But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mothers breasts. 10. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mothers belly.

Some think they find Christ in the title of the psalm upon Aijeleth Shahar, *the hind of the morning*; Christ is as the swift hind upon the mountains of spices, *Cant. viii. ult.* as the loving hind, and the pleasant roe to all believers, *Prov. v. 19.* giveth goodly words like Naphtali, who is compared to a *hind let loose*, *Gen. xlix. 21.* He is the hind of the morning, marked out by the counsels of God from eternity, to be run down by those dogs that compassed him, *ver. 16.* But others think it notes only the tune to which the psalm was set.

In these verses we have,

1. A sad complaint of God's withdrawals, *ver. 1, 2.* This may be applied to David, or any other child of God, in the want of the tokens of his favour, and pressed with the burthen of his displeasure, roaring under it, as one overwhelmed with grief and terror, and crying earnestly for relief, and in this case apprehending himself forsaken of God, unhelped, unheard, yet calling him again and again, my God, and continuing to cry day and night to him, and earnestly desiring his gracious returns. Note, 1. Spiritual desertions are the saints' forest afflictions; when their evidences are clouded, divine consolations suspended, their communion with God interrupted, and the terrors of God set themselves in array against them, how sad are their spirits, and how sapless all their comforts. 2. Even their complaints of these burthens is a good sign of spiritual life, and spiritual senses exercised. To cry out, my God, why am I sick? why am I poor? would give cause to suspect discontent and worldliness. But, *why hast thou forsaken me?* is the language of a heart binding up its happiness in God's favour. 3. When we are lamenting God's withdrawals, yet still we must call him our God, and continue to call upon him as ours. When we want the faith of assurance, we must live by a faith of adherence: However it be, yet God is good, and he is mine, and tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him; tho' he do not answer me presently, I will continue praying and waiting; tho' he be silent, I will not be silent.

But it must be applied to Christ; for in the first words of this complaint, he poured out his soul before God when he was upon the cross, *Matth. xxvii. 46.* probably, he proceeded to the following words, and some think repeated the whole psalm, if not aloud, because they cavilled at the first words, yet to himself. Note, 1. Christ in his sufferings cried earnestly to his Father, for his favour and presence with him; he cried in the day-time upon the cross, and in the night-season, when he was in his agony in the garden; he offered up strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him, and with some fear too, *Heb. v. 7.* Yet God forsook him, was far from helping him, and did not hear him, and this was it which he complains of more than all his sufferings. God delivered him into the hands of his enemies; it was by his determinate counsel that he was crucified and slain, and he did not give in sensible comforts; but Christ having made himself sin for us, in conformity thereunto, the Father laid him under the present impressions of his wrath and displeasure against sin. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief*, *Isa. liii. 10.* But even then he kept fast hold of his relation to his Father as his God, by whom he was now employed, whom he was now serving, and with whom he should shortly be glorified.

2. Encouragement taken in reference hereunto, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* Tho' God did not hear him, did not help him; yet (1.) He will think well of God: But thou art holy, not unjust, or untrue, or unkind in any of thy dispensations: tho' thou dost not presently come in to the relief of thine afflicted people, yet thou lovest them, art true to thy covenant with them, and dost not countenance the iniquity of their persecutors, *Hab. i. 13.* And as thou art infinitely pure and upright thyself, so thou delightest in the services of thine upright people: *Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel, i. e.* Thou art pleased to manifest thy glory and grace, and special presence with thy people, in the sanctuary where they attend thee with their praises; there thou art always ready to receive their homage, and of the tabernacle of meeting hast said, *This is my rest for ever.* This speaks God's wonderful condescension to his faithful worshippers, that tho' he is attended with the praises of angels, yet he is pleased to inhabit the praises of Israel. And it may comfort us in all our complaints, that tho' God seem for a while to turn a deaf ear to them, yet he is so pleased with his peoples praises, that he will in due time give them cause to change their note: *Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him.* Our Lord Jesus in his sufferings had an eye to the holiness of God, to preserve and advance the honour of that, and of his grace in inhabiting the praises of Israel, notwithstanding the iniquities of their holy things. (2.) He will take comfort from the experiences which the saints in former ages had of the benefit of faith and prayer, *ver. 4, 5.* *Our fathers trusted in thee; cried unto thee, and thou didst deliver them;* therefore thou wilt in due time deliver me, for never any that hoped in thee were made ashamed of their hope; never any that sought thee, sought thee in vain. And thou art still the same in thy self, and the same to thy people, that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are *beloved for the fathers sake*, *Rom. xi. 28.* The entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful: He that was our fathers' God must be ours, and therefore will be ours. Our Lord Jesus in his sufferings supported himself with

this, that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, and others, were in due time delivered, and were types of his exaltation too, therefore he knows, *he also shall not be confounded*, *Isa. l. 7.*

3. The complaint renewed of another grievance, and that is the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is nothing so bitter, as that before of God's withdrawals; but as that touches a gracious soul, so this a generous soul, in a very tender part, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* Our fathers were honoured, the patriarchs in their day first or last appeared great in the eye of the world, Abraham, Moses, David; but Christ is a worm, and no man. It was great condescension that he became man, a step downwards, that is, and will be the wonder of angels: yet as if it were too much, too great, to be a man, he becomes a worm and no man. He was Adam, a mean man, and Enosh a man of sorrows, but *lo Ihs*, not a considerable man; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and *his visage was marred more than any mans*, *Isa. lii. 14.* Man at the best is a worm; but he became a worm and no man. And if he had not made himself a worm, he could not have been trampled upon as he was. The word signifies such a worm as was used in dying scarlet or purple; whence some make it an allusion to his bloody sufferings. See what abuses were put upon him, (1.) He was reproached as an ill man, as a blasphemer, a Sabbath-breaker, a wine-bibber, a false prophet, an enemy to Cæsar, a confederate with the prince of the devils. (2.) He was despised of the people, as a mean contemptible man, not worth taking notice of; his country in an ill-name, his relations poor mechanicks, his followers none of the rulers or the Pharisees, but the mob. (3.) He was ridiculed as a foolish man, and one that not only deceived others, but himself too. They that saw him hanging on the cross, laughed him to scorn. So far were they from pitying him, or concerning themselves for him, that they added to his afflictions, with all the gestures and expressions of insolence, upbraiding him with his fall; they make mouths at him, make merry over him, and make a jest of his sufferings; they shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, this was he that said, *he trusted God would deliver him; now let him deliver him.* David was sometimes taunted for his confidence in God; but in the sufferings of Christ this was literally and exactly fulfilled, those very gestures were used by those that reviled him, *Matth. xxvii. 39.* they wagged their heads, nay, and so far did their malice make them forget themselves, that they used the very words, *ver. 43.* *He trusted in God, let him deliver him.* Our Lord Jesus having undertaken to satisfy for the dishonour we had done to God by our sins, did it by submitting to the highest instance of ignominy and disgrace that could be.

4. Encouragement taken as to this also, *ver. 9, 10.* Men despise me; but thou art he that took me out of the womb. David, and other good men have often, for direction to us, encouraged themselves with this, that God was not only the God of their fathers, as before, *ver. 1.* but the God of their infancy, who began betimes to take care of them, as soon as they had a being, and therefore they hope will never cast them off. He that did so well for us in that helpless, useless, state, will not leave us when he has reared us, and nursed us up into some capacity of serving him. See the early instances of God's providential care for us, (1.) In the birth: *he took us also out of the womb*, else we had died there, or been stifled in the birth. Every man's particular time begins with this pregnant proof of God's providence; as time in general began with the creation, that pregnant proof of his being. (1.) At the breast: *then didst thou make me hope*, i. e. Thou didst that for me, in providing sustenance for me, and protecting me from the dangers to which I was exposed, which encourages me to hope in thee all my days. The blessings of the breasts, as they crown the blessings of the womb, so they are earnest of the blessings of our whole lives; sure he that fed us then, will never starve us, *Job iii. 12.* (3.) In our early dedication to him: *I was cast upon thee from the womb.* Which perhaps, refers to his circumcision on the eighth day; he was then by his parents committed and given up to God as his God in covenant; for circumcision was a seal of the covenant; and this encouraged him to trust in God. Those have reason to think themselves safe, who were so soon, so solemnly gathered under the wings of the divine majesty. (4.) In the experience we have had of God's goodness to us all along ever since, drawn out in a constant, uninterrupted series of preservations and supplies: *thou art my God*, providing for me, and watching over me for good, from my mother's belly, i. e. from my coming into the world, unto this day. And if as soon as we became capable of acting reason, we put our confidence in God and committed ourselves and our way to him, we need not doubt but he will always remember the *kindness of our youth, and the love of our espousals*, *Jer. ii. 2.* This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, over whose incarnation and birth the divine providence watched with a peculiar care, when he was born in a stable, laid in a manger, and immediately exposed to the malice of Herod, and forced to flee into Egypt; when he was a child, God loved him, and called him *thence*, *Hos. xi. 1.* and the remembrance of this comforted him in his sufferings; men reproached him, and discouraged his confidence in

in God; but God had honoured him, and encouraged his confidence in him.

11. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. 12. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. 13. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. 14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. 16. For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. 18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. 19. But be not thou far from me, O LORD; O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20. Deliver my soul from the sword: my darling from the power of the dog. 21. Save me from the lions mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

In these verses we have Christ suffering, and Christ praying: by which we are directed to look for crosses, to look up to God under them.

1. Here is Christ suffering: David indeed was oft in trouble, and beset with enemies: But many of the particulars here instanced in, are such as were never true of David, and therefore must be appropriated to Christ in the depth of his humiliation.

(1.) He is here deserted by his friends: trouble and distress is near, and there is none to help, none to uphold, *ver. 11.* He trod the wine-press alone; for all his disciples forsook him and fled. It is God's honour to help, when all other helps and succours fail.

(2.) He is here insulted and surrounded by his enemies, such as were of a higher rank, who for their strength and fury are compared to *bulls, strong bulls of Bashan*, *ver. 12.* fat and fed to the full, haughty and sour; such were the chief priests and elders that persecuted Christ; and others of a lower rank, who are compared to dogs, *ver. 16.* filthy and greedy, and unwearied in running him down. There is an assembly of the wicked plotting against him, *ver. 16.* For the chief priests sat in council, to consult of ways and means to take Christ. These enemies were numerous and unanimous; many, and those of different and clashing interests among themselves, as Herod and Pilate, yet have agreed to compass me. They have carried their plot far, and seem to have gained their point, for they have beset me round, *ver. 12.* They have inclosed me, *ver. 10.* They are formidable and threatening, *ver. 13.* *They gaped upon me with their mouths,* to shew me that they would swallow me up; and this with as much strength and fierceness as a roaring ravening lion leaps upon his prey.

(3.) He is here crucified: the very manner of his death is described, tho' never in use among the Jews: *they pierced my hands and my feet*, *ver. 16.* which were nailed to the accursed tree, and the whole body left so to hang, the effect of which needs must be the most exquisite pain and torture. There is no one passage in all the Old Testament, which the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this, because it is such an eminent prediction of the death of Christ, and was so exactly fulfilled.

(4.) He is here dying, *ver. 14, 15.* dying in pain and anguish, because he was to satisfy for sin, which brought in pain, and for which we must otherwise have lain in everlasting anguish. Here is, (1.) The dissolution of the whole frame of his body: *I am poured out like water*, weak as water, and yielding to the power of death, emptying himself of all the supports of his human nature.

(2.) The dislocation of his bones: care was taken that not one of them should be broken, *Joh. xix. 36.* but they were all out of joint, by the violent stretching of his body upon the cross, as upon a rack. Or, it may note the fear that seized him in his agony in the garden, when he began to be sore amazed; the effect of which perhaps was (as sometimes it has been of great fear, *Dan. v. 6.*) That the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. His bones were put out of joint, that he might put the whole creation into joint again, which sin had put out of joint, and might make our broken bones to rejoice. (3.) The colliquation of his spirits: *my heart is like wax*, melted to receive the impressions of God's wrath, against the sins he undertook to satisfy for; melting away like the vitals of a dying man; which as it satisfied for the hardness of our hearts, so the consideration of it should help to soften them. When Job speaks of his inward trouble, he saith, *The Almighty makes my heart soft*, *Job xxiii. 16.* And see, *Psal. lxxviii. 2.* (4.) The failing of his natural force: *my strength is dried up*; so that he became parched and brittle like a potsherd, the radical moisture being wasted by the fire of divine wrath preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand before God's anger? or, who knows the

power of it? *If this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (5.) The clamminess of his mouth, an usual symptom of approaching death: *my tongue cleaveth to my jaws*; this was fulfilled both in his thirst upon the cross, *Joh. xix. 28.* and in his silence under his sufferings; for as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, nor objected against any thing done to him. (6.) His giving up the ghost: *thou hast brought me to the dust of death*, i. e. I am just ready to drop into the grave; for nothing less would satisfy divine justice. The life of the sinner was forfeited, and therefore the life of the sacrifice must be the ransom for it. The sentence of death passed upon Adam was thus expressed; *unto dust thou shalt return*: And therefore Christ having an eye to that sentence in his obedience to death, here useth a like expression, *thou hast brought me to the dust of death.*

(5.) He was stripped: the shame of nakedness was the immediate consequence of sin; and therefore our Lord Jesus was stripped of his clothes when he was crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of his righteousness, and that the shame of our nakedness might not appear. Now here we are told, (1.) How his body looked when it was thus stripped: *I may tell my bones*, *ver. 17.* His blessed body was lean and emaciated with labour, grief, and fasting, during the whole course of his ministry, which made him look as if he was near fifty years old, when he was yet but thirty-three; as we find *Joh. viii. 57.* His wrinkles now witnessed for him, that he was far from being what he was called, *a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber.* Or, his bones might be numbred, because his body was distended upon the cross, which made it easy to count his ribs. *They look and stare upon me*, i. e. my bones do, being distorted, and having no flesh to cover them, as Job saith, *chap. xvi. 8.* *My leanness rising up in me, beareth witness to my face.* Or, the standers by, the passers by, are amazed to see my bones start out thus, and instead of pitying me, are pleased even with such a rueful spectacle. (2.) What they did with his clothes, which they took from him, *ver. 18.* *They part my garments among them*, to every soldier a part, and *upon my vesture*, the seamless coat, do they cast lots. This very circumstance was exactly fulfilled, *Joh. xix. 23, 24.* And tho' it was no great instance of Christ's suffering, yet it is a great instance of the fulfilling of the scripture in him. Thus it was written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer. Let this therefore confirm our faith in him, as the true Messiah, and inflame our love to him, as the best of friends, who loved us, and suffered all this for us.

2. Here is Christ praying, and with that supporting himself under the burthen of his sufferings; Christ in his agony prayed, prayed earnestly, prayed that the cup might pass from him; when the prince of this world with his terrors set upon him, *gaped upon him as a roaring lion*, he fell upon the ground and prayed. And of that David's praying here was a type. He calls God his strength, *ver. 19.* When we cannot rejoice in God as our song, yet let us stay ourselves upon him as our strength; and take the comfort of spiritual supports, when we cannot come at spiritual delights. He prays, (1.) That God would be with him, and not set himself at a distance from him: *be not thou far from me*, *ver. 11.* and again, *ver. 19.* Whoever stands aloof from my sore, Lord, do not thou. The nearness of trouble should quicken us to draw near to God, and then we may hope that he will draw near to us. (2.) That he would help him, and make haste to help him; help him to bear up under his troubles, that he might not fail nor be discouraged, that he might neither shrink from his undertaking, nor sink under it. And the Father *heard him in that he feared*, *Heb. v. 7.* and enabled him to go through with his work. (3.) That he would deliver him, and save him, *ver. 20, 21.* (1.) Observe, What the jewel is which he is in care for, the safety of my soul, my darling, let that be redeemed from the power of the grave, *Psal. xlv. 15.* Father, into thy hands I commit that, to be conveyed safe to paradise. The psalmist here calls his soul his darling, his only one, so the word is: *My soul is my only one.* I have but one soul to take care of, and therefore the greater is my shame if I neglect it, and the greater will the loss be if I let it perish. Being my only one it ought to be my darling, for the eternal welfare of which I ought to be deeply concerned. I do not use my soul as my darling, unless I take care to preserve it from every thing that would hurt it, and to provide all necessities for it, and be entirely tender of its welfare. (2.) Observe, What the danger is from which he prays to be delivered, from the sword, the flaming sword of divine wrath which turns every way. This he dreaded more than any thing, *Gen. iii. 24.* God's anger was the wormwood and the gall in the bitter cup that was put into his hands, O deliver my soul from that; Lord, tho' I lose my life, let me not lose thy love. Save me from the power of the dog, and from the lion's mouth. This seems to be meant of Satan, that old enemy, that bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, the prince of this world with whom he was to engage in close combat, and whom he saw coming, *Joh. xiv. 30.* Lord, save me from being overpowered by his terrors. He pleads, *thou hast formerly heard me from the horns of the unicorn*, i. e. saved

saved me from him in answer to my prayer. Which may refer to the victory Christ had obtained over Satan, and his temptations, *Matth. iv.* when the devil left him for a season, *Luke iv. 13.* but now returned in another manner to attack him with his terrors. Lord, thou gavest me the victory then, give it me now, that I may spoil principalities and powers, and *cast out the prince of this world.* Has God delivered us from the horns of the unicorn, that we be not tossed? Let that encourage us to hope, that we shall be delivered from the lion's mouth, that we be not torn. He that has delivered, doth and will. This prayer of Christ, no doubt, was answered, for the Father heard him always. And tho' he did not deliver him from death, yet he suffered him not to see corruption, but the third day raised him out of the dust of death, which was a greater instance of God's favour to him, than if he had helped him down from the cross; for that would have balked his undertaking, whereas his resurrection crowned it.

In singing this, we should meditate on the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, till we experience in our own souls the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.

22. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. 23. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. 24. For he hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard. 25. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. 26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him; your heart shall live for ever. 27. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. 28. For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governour among the nations. 29. All they that be fat upon earth, shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust, shall bow before him, and none can keep alive his own soul. 30. A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation. 31. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people, that shall be born, that he hath done this.

The same that began the psalm complaining, who was no other than Christ in his humiliation, ends it here triumphing, and it can be no other than Christ in his exaltation. And as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to him, *Heb. ii. 12.* and are made his own words: *I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.* The certain prospect which Christ had of the joy set before him, not only gave him a satisfactory answer to his prayers, but turned his complaints into praises; he saw of the travel of his soul and was well satisfied, witness that triumphant word wherewith he breathed his last: *It is finished.*

Five things are here spoken of, the view of which were the satisfaction and triumph of Christ in his sufferings.

1. That he should have a church in the world, and those that were given him from eternity, should in the fulness of time be gathered into him. This is implied here; that he should see his seed, *Isa. liii. 10.* It pleased him to think, (1.) That by the declaring of God's name, *i. e.* by the preaching of the everlasting gospel in its plainness and purity, many should be effectually called to him; and to God by him. And for this end ministers should be employed to publish this doctrine to the world, who should be so much his messengers, and his voice, that their doing it should be accounted his doing it, their word is his, and by them he declares God's name. (2.) That those who are thus called in, should be brought into a very near and dear relation to him, as his brethren; for he is not only not ashamed, but greatly well pleased to call them so; not the believing Jews only his countrymen, but those of the Gentiles also, who became fellow-heirs, and of the same body, *Heb. ii. 11.* Christ is our elder brother, who takes care of us, and makes provision for us, and expects that our desire should be towards him, and that we be willing he should rule over us. (3.) That these brethren of his should be incorporated into a congregation, a great congregation, such is the universal church, the whole family that is named from him into which all the children of God that were scattered abroad are collected, and in which they are united, *Joh. xi. 52. Eph. i. 10.* And that they should also be incorporated into lesser societies, members of that great body, many religious assemblies for divine worship, on which the face of Christianity should appear, and in which the interests of it should be sup-

ported and advanced. (4.) That these should be accounted the seed of Jacob and Israel, *ver. 23.* That on them, tho' Gentiles, the blessing of Abraham might come, *Gal. iii. 14.* and to them might pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenant, and the service of God, as much as ever it did to Israel according to the flesh, *Rom. ix. 4. Heb. viii. 10.* The gospel church is called the Israel of God, *Gal. vi. 6.*

2. That God should be greatly honoured and glorified in him by that church. His Father's glory was that which he had in his eye, throughout his whole undertaking, *Joh. xvii. 4.* particularly in his sufferings, which he entered upon with this solemn request, *Father, glorify thy name, Joh. xii. 27, 28.* He foresees with pleasure,

(1.) That God would be glorified by the church, that should be gathered to him, and for that end they should be called, and gathered in, that they might be unto God for a name and a praise. Christ by his ministers will declare God's name to his brethren, as God's mouth to them, and then by them, as the mouth of the congregation to God, will God's name be praised. All that fear the Lord will praise him, *ver. 23.* even every Israelite indeed. See *Psal. cxviii. 2, 3, 4. — cxxxv. 19, 20.* The business of christians, particularly in their solemn religious assemblies, is to praise and glorify God, with a holy awe and reverence of his majesty; and therefore they that are here called upon to praise God, are called upon to fear him.

(2.) That God would be glorified in the Redeemer, and in his undertaking. Therefore Christ is said to praise God in the church, not only because he is the master of the assemblies in which God is praised, and the mediator of all the praises that are offered up to God, but because he is the matter of the church's praise. See *Eph. iii. 21.* All our praises must center in the work of redemption, and a great deal of reason we have to be thankful, (1.) That Jesus Christ was owned by his Father in his undertaking, notwithstanding the apprehension he was sometimes under, that his Father had forsaken him, *ver. 24.* For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted One, *i. e.* of the suffering Redeemer; but has graciously accepted it as a full satisfaction for sin, and a valuable consideration, on which to ground the grant of eternal life to all believers. Tho' it was offered to us poor sinners, he did not despise or abhor it for our sakes, nor did he turn his face from him that offered it, as Saul was angry with his own son, because he interceded for David, whom he looked upon as his enemy. But when he cried unto him, when his blood cried for peace and pardon for us, he heard him. This as it is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those who have thought their prayers slighted and unheard, yet if they continue to pray and wait, will find they have not sought in vain. (2.) That he himself will go on with his undertaking, and compleat it. Christ saith, I will pay my vows, *ver. 25.* Having engaged to bring many sons to glory, he will perform his engagement to the utmost, and will lose none.

3. That all humble gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him, *ver. 26.* It comforted the Lord Jesus in his sufferings, that in and through him all true believers should have everlasting consolation. (1.) The poor in spirit shall be rich in blessings, spiritual blessings; the hungry shall be filled with good things. Christ's sacrifice being accepted, the saints shall feast upon the sacrifice, as under the law upon the peace-offerings, and so partake of the altar. The meek shall eat and be satisfied, eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ's mediation; which is meat and drink to the soul, that knows its own nature and case. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ, shall have all they can desire to satisfy them, and make them easy, and shall not labour as they have done, for that which satisfieth not. (2.) They that are much in praying, shall be much in thanksgiving. They shall praise the Lord that seek him, because through Christ they are sure of finding him; in the hopes of which they have reason to praise him, even while they are seeking him. And the more earnest they are in seeking him, the more will their hearts be enlarged in his praises, when they have found him. (3.) The souls that are devoted to him, shall be for ever happy with him: your heart shall live for ever. Yours that are meek, that are satisfied in Christ, that continue to seek God, whatever becomes of your bodies, your hearts shall live for ever; the graces and comforts you have, shall be perfected in everlasting life. Christ has said, *because I live, you shall live also, Joh. xiv. 19.* and therefore that life shall be as sure, and as long as his.

4. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend itself to all corners of the earth, and should take in all sorts of people.

(1.) That it should reach far, *ver. 27, 28.* That whereas the Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now all the ends of the world should come into the church, and the partition wall being taken down, the Gentiles should be taken in. It is here prophesied, (1.) That they should be converted, they shall remember and turn to the Lord. Note, Serious reflection is the first step, and a good step it is towards true

true conversion. We must consider and turn. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father. (2.) That then they should be admitted into communion with God, and with the assemblies that serve him: *they shall worship before thee, for in every place incense shall be offered to God*, Mal. i. 11. Isa. lxvi. 23. Those that turn to God, will make conscience of worshipping before him. And good reason there is, why all the kindreds of the nations should do homage to God, for ver. 28. *The kingdom is the Lord's*; his, and his only, is the universal monarchy. (1.) The kingdom of nature is the Lord Jehovah's, and his providence rules among the nations, and upon that account we are bound to worship him. So that the design of the christian religion is to revive natural religion, and the principles and laws of it. Christ died to bring us to God, the God that made us, from whom we had revolted; and reduce us to our native allegiance. (2.) The kingdom of grace is the Lord Christ's, and he, as mediator, is appointed governor among the nations; head over all things to his church. Let every tongue therefore confess that he is Lord.

(2.) That it should include many of different ranks, ver. 25. High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, meet in Christ. (1.) Christ shall have the homage of many of the great ones, they that be fat upon earth, that live in pomp and power, they shall eat and worship; even they that fare deliciously, when they have eaten, and are full, shall bless the Lord their God for their plenty and prosperity. (2.) The poor also shall receive his gospel. Those that go down to the dust, that sit in the dust, Psal. cxiii. 7. that can scarce keep life and soul together, they shall bow before the Lord Jesus, who reckons it his honour to be the poor man's king, Psal. lxxii. 12. And whose protection doth in a special manner draw their allegiance. Or, this may be understood in general of dying men, whether poor or rich. See then what is our condition, we are going down to the dust, to which we are sentenced, and where shortly we must make our bed. Nor can we keep alive our own souls, we cannot secure our own natural life long, nor can we be the authors of our own spiritual and eternal life. It is therefore our great interest, as well as duty, to bow before the Lord Jesus, to give up ourselves to him to be his subjects and worshippers; for this is the only way, and it is a sure way to secure our happiness, when we go down to the dust. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom, by an obedient faith, to commit our souls to Jesus Christ, who is able to save them, and keep them alive for ever.

5. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, shall continue to the end, through all the ages of time. Mankind is kept up in a succession of generations; so that there is always a generation passing away, and a generation coming up: Now as Christ shall have honour from that which is passing away, and leaving the world, ver. 29. they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and it is good to die bowing before Christ, blessed are the dead who thus die in the Lord; so he shall have honour from that which is rising up, and setting out in the world, ver. 30. Observe,

1. Their application to Christ: *A seed shall serve him, i. e.* shall keep up the solemn worship of him, and profess and practise obedience to him as their Master and Lord. Note, God will have a church in the world to the end of time, and in order to that, there shall be a succession of professing christians, and gospel-ministers, from generation to generation. *A seed shall serve him, i. e.* There shall be a remnant more or less, to whom shall pertain the service of God, and to whom God will give grace to serve him; perhaps not the seed of the same persons, for grace doth not run in a blood; he doth not say their seed, but a seed; perhaps but few, yet enough to preserve the entail.

2. Christ's acknowledgment of them: *They shall be accounted to him for a generation, i. e.* He will be the same to them that he was to those who went before them; his kindness to his friends shall not die with them, but shall be drawn out to their heirs and successors, and instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom all shall acknowledge to be a *seed that the Lord hath blessed*, Isa. lxi. 9.—lxxv. 23. The generation of the righteous God will graciously own as his treasure, his children.

3. Their agency for him, ver. 31. *They shall come*, shall rise up in their day, not only to keep up the virtue of the generation that is past, and to do the work of their own generation; but to serve the honour of Christ, and the welfare of souls in the generations to come; they shall transmit to them the gospel of Christ (that sacred depositum) pure and entire, even to a people that shall be born hereafter; to them they shall declare two things, (1.) That there is an everlasting righteousness, which Jesus Christ hath brought in. This righteousness of his, and not any of our own, they shall declare to be the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our joys. See Rom. i. 16, 17. (2.) That the work of our redemption by Christ, is the Lord's own doing, (Psal. cxviii. 23.) and no contrivance of ours. This we must declare to our children, that God has done this: It is his wisdom in a mystery, it is his arm revealed.

In singing this, we must triumph in the name of Christ, as above every name; must give him honour ourselves; rejoice in the honours others do him, and in the assurance we have that

there shall be a people praising him on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.

P S A L M XXIII.

Many of David's psalms are full of complaints, but this is full of comforts, and the expressions of delight in God's great goodness and dependence upon him. It is a psalm which has been sung by good christians, and will be while the world stands, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. (1.) The psalmist here claims relation to God as his shepherd, ver. 1. (2.) He recounts his experience of the kind things God had done for him, as his shepherd, ver. 2, 3, 5. (3.) From hence he infers, that he should want no good, ver. 1. That he needed to fear no evil, ver. 4. That he would never leave or forsake him in a way of mercy; and therefore he resolves never to leave or forsake God in a way of duty, ver. 6. And in this certainly he has an eye, not only to the blessings of God's providence, which made his outward condition prosperous, but to the communications of God's grace, received by a lively faith, and returned in a warm devotion, which fills his soul with joy unspeakable. And, as in the foregoing psalm, he represented Christ dying for his sheep, so here he represents christians receiving the benefit of all the care and tenderness of that great and good shepherd.

¶ A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oyl, my cup runneth over. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

From three very comfortable premises, David in this psalm draws three very comfortable conclusions, and teaches us to do so too. We are saved by hope, and therefore that hope will not make us ashamed, because it is well grounded. It is the duty of christians to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and we are here directed to take that encouragement both from the relation wherein he stands to us, and from the experience we have had of his goodness according to that relation.

1. From God's being his shepherd, he infers that he shall not want any thing that is good for him, ver. 1. See here,

(1.) The great care that God takes of believers; he is their shepherd, and they may call him so. Time was when David was himself a shepherd, he was taken from following the ewes great with young, Psal. lxxviii. 70. and so he knew by experience the cares and tender affections of a good shepherd towards his flock; he remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them to have one that was skilful and faithful; he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this therefore he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Saviour seems to refer, when he saith, *I am the shepherd of the sheep; the good shepherd*, Joh. x. 11. He that is the shepherd of Israel, i. e. of the whole church in general, Psal. lxxx. 1. is the shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance, Isa. xl. 11. He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them, protects them, and provides for them, with more care and constancy than a shepherd can, that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God be as a shepherd to us, we must be as sheep, inoffensive, meek and quiet, silent before the shearers, nay, and before the butcher too; useful and sociable, we must know the shepherd's voice, and follow him.

(2.) The great confidence which believers have in God: If the Lord is my shepherd, my feeder, I may conclude, I shall not want any thing that is really necessary and good for me. If David penned this psalm before his coming to the crown, tho' destined to it, he had as much reason to fear wanting as any man: Once he sent his men a begging for him to Nabal, and another time went himself a begging to Achimelech; and yet when he considers that God is his shepherd, he can boldly say, *I shall not want*. Let not those fear starving that are at God's finding, and have him for their feeder. More is implied than is expressed; not only, *I shall not want*; but I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude, it is either not fit for me, or not good for me, or I shall have it in due time.

2. From his performing the office of a good shepherd to him he infers, that he needs not fear any evil in the greatest dangers and difficulties he could be in, ver. 2, 3, 4. He experienceth the benefit

benefit of God's presence with him, and care of him now, and therefore expects the benefit of them when he most needs it. See here,

(1.) The comforts of a living saint: God is his shepherd, and he is to him a God. All-sufficient to all intents and purposes; David found him so, and so have we. See the happiness of the saints, as the sheep of God's pasture.

(1.) They are well placed, well laid: *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.* We have the supports and comforts of this life from God's good hand, our daily bread from him as our Father: The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relisheth that only in which it pleaseth the senses; but to a godly man, who tasteth the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, and by faith relisheth that, tho' he has but little of the world, it is to him a green pasture, *Psal. xxxvii. 16. Prov. xv. 16, 17.* God's ordinances are the green pastures, in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. It is milk for babes, pasture for the sheep; never barren, never eaten bare, never parched, but always a green pasture for faith to feed in. God makes his saints to lie down, *i. e.* He gives them quiet and contentment in their own minds, whatever their lot is; their souls dwell at ease in him, and that makes every pasture green. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances? let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us lie down in them, abide in them; this is my rest for ever. It is by a constancy of the means of grace, that the soul is fed.

(2.) They are well guided, well led, the shepherd of Israel guideth Joseph like a flock; and every believer is under the same conduct. *He leadeth me beside the still waters.* Those that feed on God's goodness, must follow his direction; he leads them by his providence, by his word, by his Spirit; disposeth their affairs for the best, according to his counsel; disposeth their affections and actions according to his command; directs their eye, their way, and their heart into his love. The still waters by which he leads them, yield them not only a pleasant prospect, but many a cooling draught, many a reviving cordial, when they are thirsty and weary. God provides for his people not only food and rest, but refreshment also and pleasure. The consolations of God, the joys of the Holy Ghost, are these still waters by which the saints are led, streams which flow from the fountain of living waters, and make glad the city of our God. God leads his people not to the standing waters which corrupt and gather filth, not to the troubled sea, nor to the rapid rolling floods; but to the silent purling waters, for the still, but running waters, agree best with those spirits that flow out towards God, and yet do it silently. This divine conduct they are under, is stripped of its metaphor, *ver. 3. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, i. e.* in the way of my duty, in that he instructs me by his word, and directs me by conscience and providence. These are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led and kept, and never to turn aside out of them. And those only are led by the still waters of comfort, that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty, is the truly pleasant way. It is the work of righteousness that is peace. In these paths we cannot walk, unless God both lead us into them, and lead us in them.

(3.) They are well helped when any thing ails them: He restoreth my soul, *i. e.* (1.) He reduceth me when I wander. No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt it is to go astray, and then so unapt to find the way back: The best saints are sensible of their proneness to *go astray like lost sheep*, *Psal. cxix. ult.* they miss their way, and turn aside into by-paths; but when God shews them their error, gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, he restoreth the soul; and if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly, and be undone. When after one sin David's heart smote him, and after another Nathan was sent to tell him, thou art the man, God restored his soul. Tho' God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. (2.) He recovereth me when I am sick, and revives me when I am faint, and so restores the soul which was ready to depart. He is the Lord our God that healeth us, *Exod. xv. 26.* Many a time we had fainted, unless we had believed; and it was the good shepherd that kept us from fainting.

(2.) See here the courage of a dying saint, *ver. 4.* Having had such experience of God's goodness to me all my days, in six troubles and in seven, I will never distrust him, no, not in the last extremity. The rather, because all he has done for me hitherto, was not for any merit or desert of mine, but purely for his name's sake, in pursuance of his word, in performance of his promise, and for the glory of his own attributes, and relations to his people: That name therefore shall still be my strong tower, and shall assure me that he that has led me, and fed me all my life long, will not leave me at last.

Here is (1.) Imminent danger supposed: *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, i. e.* Tho' I am in peril of death, tho' in the midst of dangers, deep as a valley, dark as a shadow, and dreadful as death itself: Or rather, though I am under the arrests of death, have received the sentence of death within myself, and have all the reason in the world to look upon myself as a dying man; yet I am easy. Those that are sick, those that are old, have reason to look upon themselves as in the valley of

the shadow of death. Here is one word indeed which sounds terrible, it is death, which we must all count upon, there is no discharge in that war. But even in the supposition of the distress, there are four words which lessen the terror. It is death indeed that is before us; but (1.) It is but the shadow of death, there is no substantial evil in it; the shadow of a serpent will not sting, nor the shadow of a sword kill. (2.) It is the valley of the shadow, deep indeed, and dark and dirty, but the vallies are fruitful; and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people. (3.) It is but a walk in this valley, a gentle pleasant walk: The wicked are chased out of the world, and their souls are required; but the saints take a walk to another world, as cheerfully as they take their leave of this. (4.) It is a walk through it, they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safe to the mountain of spices on the other side it.

(2.) This danger made light of, and triumphed over upon good grounds. Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep of Christ; they tremble at it no more than sheep do, that are appointed for the slaughter. Even in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, none of these things move me. Note, A child of God may meet the messengers of death, and receive its summons with a holy security and serenity of mind. The sucking child may play upon the hole of this asp, and the weaned child, that through grace is weaned from this world, may put his hand upon this cockatrice's den, bidding a holy defiance to death, as Paul, *O death where is thy sting!* And there is ground enough for this confidence, (1.) Because there is no evil in it to a child of God; death cannot separate us from the love of God; and therefore it can do us no real harm; it kills the body, but cannot touch the soul. And what need it be dreadful, when there is nothing in it hurtful? (2.) Because the saints have God's gracious presence with them in their dying moments; he is then at their right hand, and therefore what need they be moved? The good shepherd will not only conduct, but convoy his sheep through this valley, where they are in danger of being set upon by the beasts of prey, the evening wolves: He will not only convoy them, but comfort them, then when they need most comfort. His presence shall comfort them, *Thou art with me.* His word and Spirit shall comfort them; his rod and staff, alluding to the shepherd's crook, or the rod under which the sheep passed, when they were counted, *Lev. xxvii. 32.* Or, the staff with which the shepherds drove away the dogs that would scatter or worry the sheep. It is a comfort to the saints, when they come to die, that God takes cognizance of them; he knows them that are his; that he will rebuke the enemy; that he will guide them with his rod, and sustain them with his staff. The gospel is called *the rod of Christ's strength*, *Psal. cx. 2.* and there is enough in that to comfort the saints, when they come to die, and underneath them are the everlasting arms.

3. From the good gifts of God's bounty to him now, he infers the constancy and perpetuity of his mercy, *ver. 5, 6.* Where we may observe,

1. How highly he magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him, *ver. 5. Thou preparest a table before me;* thou hast provided for me all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things requisite both for body and soul, for time and eternity; such a bountiful benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness, as David here, who acknowledgeth, (1.) That he had food convenient; a table spread, a cup filled, meat for his hunger, drink for his thirst. (2.) That he had it carefully and readily provided for him: His table was not spread with any thing that came next to hand; but prepared, and prepared before him. (3.) That he was not stinted, was not straitened, but had abundance, *my cup runs over:* enough for myself, and my friends too. (4.) That he had not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight: *Thou anointest my head with oil.* Samuel anointed him king, which was a certain pledge of further favour: But this is rather an instance of the plenty with which God had blessed him: Or, an allusion to the extraordinary entertainment of special friends, whose heads they anointed with oil, *Luke vii. 46.* Nay, some think, he still looks upon himself as a sheep, but such a one as the *poor man's ewe lamb*, *2 Sam. xii. 3.* that did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom; not only thus nobly, but thus tenderly are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made for their bodies, for their souls; for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. If providence do not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it be not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

2. How confidently he counts upon the continuance of God's favours, *ver. 6.* He had said, *ver. 1. I shall not want;* but now he speaks more positively, more comprehensively, *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* His hope riseth, and his faith is strengthened by being acted. Observe (1.) What he promiseth himself, goodness and mercy, *i. e.* all the streams of it flowing from the fountain; pardoning mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining, supplying, mercy. (2.) The manner of the conveyance of it: It shall follow me, as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; it shall follow them into all places, and all conditions, shall be always ready to them. (3.) The continuance of it: It shall follow me all my life long, even

even to the last; for whom God loves, he loves to the end. (4.) The constancy of it: All the days of thy life, as duly as the day comes; it shall be new every morning, *Lam. iii. 22, 23.* like the manna that was given to the Israelites daily. (5.) The certainty of it: Surely it shall. It is as sure as the promise of the God of truth can make it; and we know whom we have believed. (6.) Here is a prospect of the perfection of bliss in the future state. So some take the latter clause; goodness and mercy having followed me all the days of my life on this earth, when that is ended, I shall remove to a better world, to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, in our Father's house above, where there are many mansions. *With what I have, I am pleased much; with what I hope for, more.* All this, and heaven too! Then we serve a good master.

3. How resolutely he determines to cleave to God and to his duty. We read the last clause as David's covenant with God: *I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever*, i. e. as long as I live, and I will praise him while I have any being. We must dwell in his house as servants, that desired to have their ears bored to his door-post, to serve him for ever. If God's goodness to us be like the morning light, which shines more and more to the perfect day; let not ours to him be like the morning cloud, and the early dew, that passeth away. Those that would be satisfied with the fatness of God's house, must keep close to the duties of it.

P S A L M XXIV.

This psalm is concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ: (1.) His providential kingdom, by which he rules the world, ver. 1, 2.

(2.) The kingdom of his grace by which he rules in his church.

1. Concerning the subjects of that kingdom; their character, ver.

4, 5, 7. Their charter, ver. 5. 2. Concerning the King of that

kingdom; and a summons to all to give him admission, ver. 7—10.

It is supposed, that the psalm was penned upon occasion of David's

bringing up the ark to the place prepared for it; and the intention

of it was, to lead the people above the pomp of external ceremonies to a holy life, and faith in Christ, of whom the ark was a

type.

¶ A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
2. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Here is, 1. God's absolute propriety in this part of the creation, where our lot is cast, ver. 1. We are not to think, that the heavens, even the heavens only, are the Lord's, and the numerous and bright inhabitants of the upper world, and that this earth being so small and inconsiderable a part of the creation, and at such a distance from the royal palace above, is neglected, and that he claims no interest in it: No, even the earth is his, and this lower world, and tho' he has prepared the throne of his glory in the heavens, yet his kingdom ruleth over all, and even the worms of this earth are not below his cognizance, nor from under his dominion.

(1.) When God gave the earth to the children of men, He still reserved to himself the property, and only let it out to them as tenants or usufructuaries: *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; the mines that are lodged in the bowels of it, even the richest; the fruits it produceth; all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; our lands and houses, and all the improvements that are made of this earth, by the skill and industry of man, they are all his. These indeed in the kingdom of grace are justly looked upon as emptiness; for they are vanity of vanities, nothing to a soul; but in the kingdom of providence they are fulness. *The earth is full of God's riches, so is the great and wide sea also.* All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand; so that wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he doth not go off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its products, is but lent to us, it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world, is not so against his claims. That which is most remote for us, as that which passeth through the paths of the sea, or is hid in the bottom of it, is the Lord's, and he knows where to find it.

(2.) The habitable part of this earth is his in a special manner, *Prov. viii. 31. The world, and they that dwell therein.* We ourselves are not our own, our bodies, our souls are not: all souls are mine, saith God; for he is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own, they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men are his, that know him not, nor own their relation to him. Now this comes in here to shew, that tho' God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people, ver. 3, 4, 5. it is not because he needs them, or can be benefited by them, for the earth is his, and all in it, *Exod. xix. 5. Psal. 1. 12.* It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ hath

as mediator, over the utmost parts of the earth, which are given him for his possession: the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand, power over all flesh. The apostle quotes this scripture twice together, in his discourse about things offered to idols, *1 Cor. x. 26, 28.* If it be sold in the shambles, eat it and ask no questions, for the earth is the Lord's, it is God's good creature, and you have a right to it; but if one tell you, it was offered to an idol, forbear, *for the earth is the Lord's*, and there is enough besides. This is a good reason why we should be content with our allotment in this world, and not envy others theirs; *the earth is the Lord's*, and may he not do what he will with his own, and give to some more of it, to others less, as it pleaseth him?

2. The ground of this propriety: the earth is his by an indisputable title, *for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods*, ver. 2. It is his; for, (1.) He made it, formed it, founded it, and fitted it for the use of man. The matter his; for he made it out of nothing: the form his; for he made it according to the eternal counsels and ideas of his own mind: He made it himself, he made it for himself; so that he is sole, entire, and absolute owner, and none can let us a title to any part, but by, from, and under him, see *Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12.* (2.) He made it so as no one else could: it is the creature of omnipotence, for it is founded upon the seas, upon the floods; a weak and unstable foundation (one would think) to build the earth upon, and yet if almighty power pleaseth it shall serve to bear the weight of this earth. The waters which at first covered the earth, and rendered it unfit to be a habitation for man, were ordered under it, that the dry land might appear, and so they are as a foundation to it, see *Psal. civ. 8, 9.* (3.) He continues it, he hath established it, fixed it, so that tho' one generation passeth, and another cometh, the earth abideth, *Eccles. i. 4.* And his providence is a continued creation, *Psal. cxix. 96.* The founding of the earth upon the floods, should mind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are, their foundation is not only sand, but water, it is therefore our folly to build upon them.

3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? and who shall stand in his holy place? 4. He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. 5. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

From this world, and the fulness thereof, the psalmist's meditations rise of a sudden to the great things of another world, the foundation of which is not on the seas, nor on the floods. The things of this world God hath given to the children of men, and we are much indebted to his providence for them; but they will not make a portion for us. And therefore,

1. Here is an enquiry after better things, ver. 3. This earth is God's footstool; but if we had never so much of it, we must be here but a while, must shortly go hence, and *Who then shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?* Who shall go to heaven hereafter? and as an earnest of that, shall have communion with God in holy ordinances now? A soul that knows and considers its own nature, original, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied, there is not found among all the creatures a help-meet for man, and therefore it will think of ascending towards God, towards heaven; will ask, What shall I do to rise to that high place, that hill where the Lord dwells, and manifests himself, that I may be acquainted with him; and to abide in that happy, holy, place, where he meets his people, and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those, whom God owns for his peculiar people, and who are his in another manner, than the earth is his and its fulness? This question is much the same with that, *Psal. xv. 1.* the hill of Sion on which the temple was built, typified the church both visible and invisible: When the people attended the ark to its holy place, David puts them in mind, that these were but patterns of heavenly things, and therefore by them they should be led to consider the heavenly things themselves.

2. An answer to this enquiry; in which we have,

1. The property of God's peculiar people, who shall have communion with him in grace and glory.

(1.) They are such as keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. They have clean hands; not spotted with the pollutions of the world, and the flesh. None that were ceremonially unclean might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation which is required in all those that have fellowship with God. The hands lifted up in prayer must be pure hands, no blot of unjust gain cleaving to them, nor anything else that defiles the man, and is offensive to the holy God.

(2.) They are such as make conscience of being really, that is, of being inwardly, as good as they seem to be outwardly. They have pure hearts. And we make nothing of our religion,

if we do not make heart-work of it. It is not enough that our hands be clean before men, but we must also wash our hearts from wickedness, and not allow ourselves in any secret heart-impurities, which are open before the eye of God. Yet in vain do those pretend to have pure and good hearts, whose hands are defiled with the acts of sin. That is a pure heart which is sincere and without guile, in covenanting with God, which is carefully guarded, that the wicked one, the unclean spirit, touch it not; which is purified by faith, and conformed to the image and will of God, see *Matt. v. 8.*

(3.) They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world; that do not lift up their souls unto vanity, whose hearts are not carried out inordinately towards the wealth of the world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense, who do not chuse these things for their portion, nor reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain, and unsatisfying.

(4.) They are such as deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God, and their contracts with men, they have not sworn deceitfully, not broken their promises, violated their engagements, or taken any false oath. Those that have no regard to the obligations of truth, or the honour of God's name, are unfit for a place in God's holy hill.

(5.) They are a praying people, *ver. 6. This is the generation of them that seek him.* In every age there is a remnant of such as these, men of this character, that are *accounted to the Lord for a generation*, *Psal. xxii. 30.* And they are such as seek God, *that seek thy face, O Jacob.* (1.) They join themselves to God to seek him; not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavour to obtain his favour, and keep themselves in his love; that having made it the top of their happiness, make it the top of their ambition to be accepted of him, and therefore take care and take pains to approve themselves to him. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend, and the way being up-hill, we have need to put forth ourselves to the utmost, as those that seek diligently. (2.) They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them; being brought into communion with God, they come into the communion of saints; conforming to the patterns of the saints that are gone before, so some understand this; they seek God's face as Jacob (so some) who was therefore surnamed Israel, because he wrestled with God and prevailed, sought him and found him: and associating with the saints of their own day, they shall court the favour of God's church, *Rev. iii. 9.* shall be glad of an acquaintance with God's people, *Zech. viii. ult.* shall incorporate themselves with them, and when they *subscribe with their hand to the Lord*, shall call themselves by the name of Jacob, *Isa. xlv. 5.* As soon as ever Paul was converted, he *joined himself to the disciples*, *Acts ix. 26.* They shall seek God's face in Jacob (so some) *i. e.* in the assemblies of his people; *Thy face, O God of Jacob;* so our margin supplies it, and makes it easy. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer are the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, *seek ye me in vain.*

2. The privileges of God's peculiar people, *ver. 5.* They shall be made truly, and for ever, happy. (1.) They shall be blessed: They shall receive the blessing from the Lord, all the fruits and gifts of God's favour according to his promise; and those whom God blesteth, they are blessed indeed, for it is his prerogative to command the blessing. (2.) They shall be justified and sanctified: These are spiritual blessings in heavenly things which they shall receive, even righteousness, the very thing they hunger and thirst after, *Matt. v. 6.* Righteousness is blessedness, and it is from God only that we must expect it, for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall receive the reward of their righteousness, (so some) *the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give*, *2 Tim. iv. 8.* (3.) They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation. Note, Where God gives righteousness, he certainly designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven, shall be brought safe to heaven, and then they will find what they have been seeking to their endless satisfaction.

7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. 8. Who is this King of glory? the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. 9. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. 10. Who is this King of glory? the LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

What is spoken once, is spoken a second time in these verses; such repetitions are usual in songs, and have a great deal of beauty in them. Here is, (1.) Entrance once and again demanded for the King of glory, the doors and gates are to be thrown open, thrown wide open to give him admission, for behold, he stands at the door and knocks, ready to come in. (2.) Inquiry once

and again made concerning this mighty prince in whose name entrance is demanded; *Who is this King of glory?* as when any knock at our door, it is common to ask, who is there? (3.) Satisfaction once and again given concerning the royal person that makes the demand, *It is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts.* *ver. 8, 10.* Now,

1. This splendid entry here described, it is probable, refers to the solemn bringing in of the ark into the tent David pitched for it, or the temple Solomon built for it; for when David prepared materials for the building of it, it was proper enough for him to prepare a psalm for the dedication of it. The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called everlasting doors, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain. They are taught to ask, *Who is the King of glory?* And they that bare the ark, thus to answer, and very fitly, because the ark was a symbol or token of God's presence, *Josh. iii. 11.* Or, it may be taken as a poetical figure designed to represent the thing the more effectually. God in his word and ordinances is thus to be welcomed by us, (1.) With great readiness; the door and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls, and if we had six hundred necks we should bow them all to the authority of it. (2.) With all reverence, remembering how great a God he is with whom we have to do, in all our approaches to him.

2. Doubtless it points at Christ, of whom the ark with the mercy-seat was a type.

1. We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven, and the welcome given to him there. When he had finished his work on earth, he ascended *in the clouds of heaven*, *Dan. vii. 13, 14.* The gates of heaven must then be opened to him, those doors that may be truly called everlasting, which had been shut against us, to keep the way of the tree of life, *Gen. iii. 24.* Our Redeemer found them shut, but having by his blood made atonement for sin, and gained a title to enter into the holy place, *Heb. ix. 12.* as one having authority he demanded entrance, not for himself only, but for us; for as the forerunner he is for us entered, and *opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.* The keys not only of hell and death, but of heaven and life, must be put into his hand. His approach being very magnificent, the angels are brought in asking, *Who is this king of glory?* for angels keep the gates of the New Jerusalem, *Rev. xxi. 12.* When the first begotten was brought into the upper world, the angels were to worship him, *Heb. i. 6.* and accordingly they here ask with wonder, *Who is he?* this that cometh *with died garments from Bozrah*, *Isa. lxiii. 1, 2, 3.* for he appears in that world, *as a lamb that had been slain.* It is answered, that he is strong and mighty, mighty in battle to save his people, and subdue his and their enemies.

2. We may apply it to Christ's entrance into the souls of men by his word and Spirit, that they may be his temples: Christ's presence in them, is like that of the ark in the temple, it sanctifies them. *Behold, he stands at the door and knocks*, *Rev. iii. 20.* It is required, that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him; not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is delivered to the right owner, after the title has been contested. This is the gospel call and demand; that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosanna's, *Blessed is he that cometh.* That we may do this aright, we are concerned to ask, *Who this King of glory is?* to acquaint ourselves with him, whom we are to believe in, and to love above all. And the answer is ready; He is Jehovah, and will be Jehovah, our righteousness, an all-sufficient Saviour to us, if we give him entrance and entertainment. He is strong and mighty, and the Lord of hosts; and therefore it is at our peril if we deny him entrance; for he is able to avenge the affront; he can force his way, and can break those in pieces with his iron rod, that will not submit to the golden scepter.

In singing this, let our hearts cheerfully answer to this call, as it is in the first words of the next psalm. *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*

P S A L M XXV.

This psalm is full of devout affection to God. The out-goings of holy desires towards his favour and grace, and the lively actings of faith in his promises. We may learn out of it, (1.) What it is to pray, ver. 1, 15. (2.) What we must pray for; the pardon of sin, ver. 6, 7, 18. Direction in the way of duty, ver. 4, 5. The favour of God, ver. 16. Deliverance out of our troubles, ver. 17, 18. Preservation from our enemies, ver. 20, 21. And the salvation of the church of God, ver. 22. (3.) What we may plead in prayer; our confidence in God, ver. 2, 3, 5, 20, 21. Our distress, and the malice of our enemies, ver. 17, 19. Our sincerity, ver. 21. (4.) What precious promises we have to encourage us in prayer; of guidance and instruction, ver. 8, 9, 12. The benefit of the covenant, ver. 10. And

And the pleasure of communion with God, ver. 13, 14. It is easy to apply the several passages of this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it; for we have often troubles, and always sins, to complain of at the throne of grace.

¶ A psalm of David.

UNTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. 2. O my God, I trust in thee, let me not be ashamed: let not mine enemies triumph over me. 3. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed; let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. 4. Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. 5. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day. 6. Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies, and thy loving kindnesses: for they have been ever of old. 7. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O LORD.

Here is, 1. David's professions of desire towards God and dependence on him. He often begins his psalms with such professions; not to move God, but to move himself, and to engage himself to answer those professions.

1. He professeth his desire towards God: *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*, ver. 1. In the foregoing psalm, ver. 4. it was made the character of a good man, that he *has not lift up his soul to vanity*; and a call was given to the everlasting gates to lift up their heads for the *King of glory to come in*, ver. 1. To which character, to which call, David here answers, Lord, I lift up my soul, not to vanity, but to thee. Note, In worshipping God, we must lift up our souls to him. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God; God must be eyed, and the soul employed; *Sursum Corda*, Up with your hearts, was antiently used as a call to devotion. With a holy contempt of the world, and the things of it; by a fixed thought, and active faith, we must set God before us, and let out our desires towards him as the fountain of our happiness.

2. He professeth his dependence upon God; and begs for the benefit and comfort of that dependence, ver. 2. *O my God, I trust in thee*. His conscience witnessed for him, that he had no confidence in himself, or in any creature; and that he had no diffidence of God, or of his power or promise. He pleaseth himself with this profession of faith in God: Having put his trust in God, he is easy, is well satisfied, and quiet from the fear of evil: And he pleads it with God, whose honour it is to help those that honour him, by trusting in him. What men put a confidence in, is either their joy, or their shame, according as it proves: Now David here, under the direction of faith, prays earnestly. (1.) That shame might not be his lot: *Let me not be ashamed of my confidence in thee*; let me not be shaken from it by any prevailing fears, and let me not be in the issue disappointed of what I depend upon thee for; but, Lord, *keep what I have committed unto thee*. Note, If we make our confidence in God our stay, it shall not be our shame. And if we triumph in him, our enemies shall not triumph over us, as they would, if we should now sink under our fears, or should in the issue come short of our hopes. (2.) That it might not be the lot of any that trusted in God: All the saints have obtained a like precious faith; and therefore doubtless, it will be alike successful in the issue: And thus the communion of saints is kept up, even by their praying one for another. True saints will make supplication for all saints. It is certain, none that by a believing attendance wait on God; and by a believing hope wait for him, shall be made ashamed of it. (3.) That it might be the lot of the transgressors. *Let them be ashamed that transgress without cause, or vainly*, as the word is. (1.) Upon no provocation; they revolt from God and their duty, from David and his government, (so some) without any occasion given them, not being able to pretend any iniquity they have found in God, or that in any thing he hath wearied them. The weaker the temptation is by which men are drawn to sin, the stronger the corruption is by which they are driven to it. Those are the worst transgressors, that sin for sinning sake. (2.) To no purpose. They know their attempts against God are fruitless, they imagine a vain thing, and therefore they will soon be ashamed of them.

3. He begs direction from God in the way of his duty, ver. 3. 4. 5. Once again he prays to God to teach him. He was a knowing man himself, but the most intelligent, the most observant, both need and desire to be taught of God; from him we must be ever learning. Observe, (1.) What he desired to learn; teach me, not fine words, or fine notions, but teach me thy ways, thy paths, thy truth. The ways in which thou walkest towards me, which are *all mercy and truth*, ver. 10. and the ways in which thou wouldst have me to walk towards thee. Those are best learned who understand their duty, and know the good things

they should do, Eccl. ii. 3. Thy paths, and thy truth are the same; divine laws are all founded upon divine truths. The way of God's precepts is the way of truth, *Psal. cxix. 30*. Christ is both the way and the truth, and therefore we must learn Christ. (2.) What he desires of God in order to this. 1. That he would enlighten his understanding concerning his duty. Shew me thy way, and so teach me. In doubtful cases we should pray earnestly, that God would make it plain to us what he would have us to do. 2. That he would incline his will to it; and strengthen him in it. Lead me, and so teach me. Not only as we lead one that is dim-sighted to keep him from missing his way, but as we lead one that is sick, and feeble; and fainty to help him forward in the way, and to keep him from fainting and falling. We go no farther in the way to heaven than God is pleased to lead us, and to hold us up. (3.) What he pleads; 1. His great expectation from God; *Thou art the God of my salvation*. Note, Those that chuse the salvation of God as their end, and make him the God of their salvation, may come boldly to him for direction in the way that leads to that end. If God save us, he will teach us, and lead us: He that gives salvation, will give instruction. 2. His constant attendance on God; *On thee do I wait all the day*. Whence should a servant expect direction what to do, but from his own master, on whom he waits all the day? If we sincerely desire to know our duty with a resolution to do it, we need not question but that God will direct us in it.

4. He appeals to God's infinite mercy; and casts himself upon that, not pretending to any merit of his own, ver. 6. *Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies*, and for the sake of those mercies lead me and teach me; for they have been ever of old, i. e. (1.) Thou always wast a merciful God; it is thy name; it is thy nature and property to shew mercy. (2.) Thy counsels and designs of mercy were from everlasting; the vessels of mercy were before all worlds ordained to glory. (3.) The instances of thy mercy to the church in general, and to me in particular, were early and antient, and constant hitherto; they began of old, and never ceased. Thou hast taught me from my youth up; teach me now.

5. He is in a special manner earnest for the pardon of his sins, ver. 7. *O remember not the sins of my youth*: Lord, remember thy mercies, ver. 6. which speak for me, and not my sins which speak against me. Here is, (1.) An implicit confession of sin; he instanceth particularly in the sins of his youth: Note, Our youthful faults and follies should be matter of our repentance and humiliation long after; because time doth not wear out the guilt of sin. Old people should mourn for the sinful mirth, and be in pain for the sinful pleasures of their youth. He aggravates his sins, calling them hid transgressions; and the more holy, just, and good, the law is, which sin is the transgression of; the more exceeding sinful it ought to appear to us. (2.) An express petition for mercy: (1.) That he might be acquitted from guilt, *Remember not the sins of my youth*, i. e. remember them not against me, lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment with me for them. When God pardons sin, he is said to remember it no more, which notes a plenary remission; he forgives and forgets. (2.) That he might be accepted in God's sight; remember thou me; think on me for good, and come in seasonably for my succour. We need desire no more to make us happy, than for God to remember us with favour. His plea is, "according to thy mercy, and for thy goodness sake." Note, It is God's goodness and not ours; his mercy and not our own merit, that must be our plea for the pardon of sin; and all the good we stand in need of: This plea we must always rely upon, as those that are sensible of our poverty and unworthiness, and as those that are satisfied of the riches of God's mercy and grace.

8. Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. 9. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. 10. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant, and his testimonies. 11. For thy names sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. 12. What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. 13. His soul shall dwell at ease: and his seed shall inherit the earth. 14. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant.

God's promises are here mixed with David's prayers: Many petitions there were in the former part of the psalm, and many in the latter; and here in the middle of the psalm he meditates upon the promises, and by a lively faith sucks, and is satisfied from these breasts of consolation; for the promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for, and encouraging our faith and hope in prayer; but they are a present answer to prayer. Let the prayer be made according to the promise, and then the promise may be read as a return to the

the prayer; and we are to believe the prayer is heard, because the promise will be performed. But in the midst of the promises, we find one petition which seems to come in somewhat abruptly, and should have followed upon *ver. 7.* it is that, *ver. 11. Pardon mine iniquity.* But prayers for the pardon of sin are never impertinent; we mingle sin with all our actions, and therefore should mingle such prayers with all our devotions. He enforces this petition with a double plea. The former is very natural; *For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity*, because thou hast proclaimed thy name gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity; for thy glory sake, for thy promise sake, for thine own sake, *Isa. xliii. 25.* But the latter is very surprizing; *Pardon mine iniquity for it is great*; and the greater it is, the more will divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it. It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins, to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, *Exod. xxxiv. 7.* It is great, and therefore I am undone, for ever undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose for the pardon of it. It is great, *i. e.* I see it so: The more we see of the heinousness of our sins, the better qualified we are to find mercy with God. When we confess sin, we must aggravate it.

Let us now take a view of the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong, and who may expect the benefit of them. We are all sinners, and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes, *ver. 8.* He will teach sinners, tho' they be sinners; for Christ came into the world to save sinners, and in order to that to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance.

These promises are sure to those, who tho' they have been sinners, have gone astray, yet now keep God's word. To such, (1.) As keep his covenant and his testimonies, *ver. 10. i. e.* that take his precepts for their rule, and his promises for their portion; that having taken God to be to them a God, live upon that, and having given up themselves to be to him a people, live up to that. Tho' through the infirmity of the flesh they sometimes break the command, yet by a sincere repentance, when at any time they do amiss, and a constant adherence by faith to God as their God, they keep the covenant, and do not break that. (2.) To such as fear him, *ver. 12.* and again, *ver. 14.* that stand in awe of his majesty, and worship him with reverence, submit to his authority, and obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath, and are afraid of offending him.

2. Upon what these promises are grounded, and what encouragement we have to build upon them. Here are two things which ratify and confirm all the promises.

(1.) The perfections of God's nature. We value the promise by the character of him that makes it; we may therefore depend upon God's promises, for good and upright is the Lord, and therefore he will be as good as his word. So kind that he cannot deceive us, so true that he cannot break his promise. *Faithful is he that hath promised*, who also will do it. He was good in making the promise, and therefore will be upright in performing it.

(2.) The agreeableness of all he saith and doth with the perfections of his nature, *ver. 10. All the paths of the Lord, i. e.* all his promises and all his providences are mercy and truth, *i. e.* they are like himself good and upright. All God's dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes, and the truth of his promises; all he doth comes from love, covenant love; and they may see in it his mercy displayed, and his word fulfilled. What a mighty satisfaction may this be to good people, that whatever afflictions they are exercised with, *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth*, and so it will appear when they come to their journey's end.

3. What these promises are,

1. That God will instruct and direct them in the way of their duty. This is most insisted upon, because it is an answer to David's prayers, *ver. 4, 5. Shew me thy ways, and lead me.* We should fix our thoughts, and act our faith most on those promises which suit our present case. (1.) He will teach sinners in the way, because they are sinners, and therefore need teaching, when they see themselves sinners and desire teaching, then he will teach them the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. He doth by his gospel make known this way to all, and by his Spirit open the understanding, and guide penitent sinners that enquire after it. The devil leads men blind-fold to hell, but God enlightens mens eyes, sets things before them in a true light, and so leads them to heaven. (2.) The meek will he guide, the meek will he teach, *i. e.* those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolved to follow the divine conduct; *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* These he will guide in judgment, *i. e.* by the rule of the written word; he will guide them in that which is practical, which relates to sin and duty; so as that they may keep conscience void of offence: and he will do it judiciously, (so some) *i. e.* he will suit his conduct to their case; he will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness, and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them his way. All good people make God's way their way, and desire to be taught that; and

those that do so shall be taught and lead in that way. (3.) *Him that feareth the Lord, he will teach in the way that he shall chuse*, either in the way that God shall chuse, or that the good man shall chuse. It comes all to one, for he that fears the Lord chuseth the things that please him. If we chuse the right way, he that directed our choice will direct our steps, and will lead us in it. If ye chuse wisely, God will give us grace to walk wisely.

2. That God will make them easy, *ver. 13. His soul shall dwell at ease, shall lodge in goodness, marg.* Those that devote themselves to the fear of God, and give up themselves to be taught of God, it is their own fault if they be not easy. The soul that is sanctified by the grace of God, and much more that is comforted by the peace of God, dwells at ease. Even when the body is sick and lies in pain, yet the soul may dwell at ease in God, may return to him, and repose in him as its rest. Many things occur to make us uneasy, but there is enough in the covenant of grace to balance them all, and to make us easy.

3. That he will give to them and theirs as much of this world as is good for them. *His seed shall inherit the earth.* Next to our care concerning our souls, is our care concerning our seed, and God has a blessing in store for the generation of the upright. They that fear God shall inherit the earth, shall have a competency in it, and the comfort of it; and their children shall fare the better for their prayers, when they are gone.

4. That God will admit them into the secret of communion with himself, *ver. 14. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.* They understand his word, for if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, *John vii. 17.* They that receive the truth in the love of it, and experience the power of it, best understand the mystery of it. They know the meaning of his providence, and what God is doing with them better than others. *Shall I hide from Abraham the things that I do?* *Gen. xviii. 17.* He calls them not servants, but friends, as he called Abraham. They know by experience the blessings of the covenant, and the pleasure of that fellowship which gracious souls have with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This honour have all his saints.

15. Mine eyes are ever towards the LORD: for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. 16. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me: for I am desolate and afflicted. 17. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. 18. Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins. 19. Consider mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred. 20. O keep my soul and deliver me: let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee. 21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me: for I wait on thee. 22. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

David, encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here renews his addresses to God, and concludes the psalm as he began, with the professions of dependence upon God, and desire towards him.

1. He lays open before God the calamitous condition he was in: His feet were in the net, held fast, and entangled, so that he could not extricate himself out of his difficulties, *ver. 15.* He was desolate and afflicted, *ver. 16.* And it is common for those that are afflicted to be desolate; their friends desert them then, and they are themselves disposed to sit alone, and keep silence, *Lam. iii. 26.* David calls himself desolate and solitary, because he depended not much upon his servants and soldiers, but relied as entirely upon God, as if he had no prospect at all of help and succour from any creature. Being in distress, in many distresses, the troubles of his heart were enlarged, *ver. 17. i. e.* He grew more and more melancholy, and troubled in mind. Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: that was it that broke and wounded his spirit, and made his outward troubles lie heavy upon him. He was in affliction and pain, *ver. 18.* His enemies that persecuted him were many, and malicious, they hated him; and very barbarous, it was with a cruel hatred that they hated him, *ver. 19.* Such were Christ's enemies, and the persecutors of his church.

2. He expressed the dependence he had upon God in these distresses, *ver. 15. Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord.* Idolaters were for gods that they could see with their bodily eyes, and they had their eyes ever towards their idols, *Isa. xvii. 7, 8.* But it is an eye of faith that we must have towards God, who is a spirit, *Zeck. ix. 1.* Our meditation of him must be sweet, and we must always set him before us: in all our ways we must acknowledge him, and do all to his glory. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, not only in ordinances, but in providences, not only in the acts of devotion, but in the whole course of our conversation. David had the comfort of this in his affliction;

affliction; for because his eyes were ever towards the Lord, he doubted not but he would pluck his feet out of the net; that he would deliver him from the corruptions of his own heart, (so some) from the designs of his enemies against him (so others): Those that have their eye ever towards God, shall not have their feet long in the net. He repeats his profession of dependence upon God, ver. 20. *Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee*; and of expectation from him, *I wait on thee*, ver. 21. And it is good thus to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.

3. He prays earnestly to God for relief and succour.

1. For himself: see how he begs (1.) For the remission of sin, ver. 18. *Forgive all my sins*: Those were his heaviest burthens, and which brought upon him all his other burthens. He had begged, ver. 7. for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and ver. 11. for the pardon of some one particular iniquity, that was remarkably great, which some think was his sin in the matter of Uriah: But here he prays, Lord, *forgive all, take away all iniquity*. It is observable, that as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it, *Look upon my affliction and my pain*, and do with it as thou pleasest: But as to his sin, he asks for no less than a pardon, *Forgive all my sins*. When at any time we are in trouble, we should be more concerned about our sins to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions to get them removed. Yet he prays (2.) For the redress of his grievances. His mind was troubled for God's withdrawals from him, and under the sense he had of his displeasure against him for his sin; and therefore he prays, ver. 16. *Turn thee unto me*: And if God turn to us, no matter who turns from us. His condition was troubled, and in reference to that he prays, *O bring thou me out of my distresses*. I see no way of deliverance open; but thou canst either find one, or make one. His enemies were spiteful; and in reference to that he prays, *O keep my soul from falling into their hands, or else deliver me out of their hands*.

Four things he mentions by way of plea, to enforce these petitions; and refers himself and them to God's consideration. (1.) He pleads God's mercy: *Have mercy upon me*. Men of the greatest merits were undone, if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercies. (2.) He pleads his own misery, the distress he was in, his affliction and pain, especially the troubles of his heart: All which made him the proper object of divine mercy. (3.) He pleads the iniquity of his enemies: Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands. (4.) He pleads his own integrity, ver. 21. Tho' he had owned himself guilty before God, and had confessed his sins against him; yet as to his enemies, he had the testimony of his conscience, that he had done them no wrong; which was his comfort, when they hated him with cruel hatred: And he prays, that this might preserve him. This intimates, that he did not expect to be safe any longer than he continued in his integrity and uprightness; and that while he did continue in it, he did not doubt of being safe. Sincerity will be our best security in the worst of times. Integrity and uprightness will be a man's preservation more than the wealth and honour of the world can be; this will preserve us to the heavenly kingdom. We should therefore pray to God to preserve us in our integrity, and then be assured, that that will preserve us.

2. For the church of God, ver. 22. *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles*. David was now in trouble himself, but he thinks it not strange, since trouble is the lot of all God's Israel: And why should any one member fare better than the whole body? David's troubles were enlarged, and very earnest he was with God to deliver him, yet he forgets not the distresses of God's church; for when we have never so much business of our own at the throne of grace, we must still remember to pray for the publick. Good men have little comfort in their own safety, while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy, that God would at length give David rest, and therewith give Israel rest from all their enemies round about. It is a prophecy of the sending of the Messiah in due time to *redeem Israel from his iniquities*, Psal. cxxx. ult. and so to redeem them from their troubles: And of the happiness of the future state. In heaven, and in heaven only, will God's Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

P S A L M XXVI.

Holy David is in this psalm putting himself upon a solemn trial, not by God and his country; but by God and his own conscience, to both which he appeals touching his integrity, ver. 1, 2. And for the proof of it he alledgeth, (1.) His constant regard to God and his grace, ver. 3. (2.) His rooted antipathy to sin and sinners, ver. 4, 5. (3.) His sincere affection to the ordinances of God, and his care about them, ver. 6, 7, 8. Having thus proved his integrity, (1.) He deprecates the doom of the wicked, ver. 9, 10. (2.) He casts himself upon the mercy and grace of God; with a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and

No. xl.

his hope in God, ver. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we must be and do, that we may have the favour of God, and comfort in our own consciences; and comfort ourselves with it as David doth, if we can say, that in any measure we have through grace answered these characters. The learned Amyraldus in his argument of this psalm suggests, that David is here by the spirit of prophecy carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here saith of his spotless innocency was fully and eminently true, and of him only, and to him we may apply it in singing this psalm. We are compleat in him.

A psalm of David.

1. JUDGE me, O LORD, for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD: therefore I shall not slide. 2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. 3. For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth. 4. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. 5. I have hated the congregation of evil doers: and will not sit with the wicked.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who to give some colour to their unjust rage, represented him as a very ill man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdemeanors, dressed him up in the skin of wild beasts that they might bait him. Innocency itself is no fence to the name, tho' it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers, that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David doth in this case.

1. He appeals to God's righteous sentence, ver. 1. *Judge me, O God*; i. e. Be thou judge between me and my accusers, between the persecutor and the poor prisoner; bring me off with honour, and put them to shame that bely me. Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary, so that in a controversy with him, he could appeal to no other but to God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, *Lord, enter not into judgment with me*, Psal. cxliii. 2. *Remember not my transgressions*, Psal. xxv. 7. there he appeals to God's mercy; but as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God's justice, and begs of him to judge for him, as *Psal. xliii. 1*. Or thus; he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin, he owns his iniquity is great, and he is undone if God in his infinite mercy do not forgive him; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope, that according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned, and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused, that there is a righteous God who sooner or later will clear up their innocency; and a comfort to all that are sincere in religion, that God himself is a witness to his sincerity.

2. He submits to his unerring search, ver. 2. *Examine me, O Lord, and prove me*, as gold is proved, whether it be standard. God knows every man's true character, for he knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, and sees through every disguise; David prays, *Lord, examine me*; which speaks him greatly well pleased that God did know him; and truly desirous that he would discover him to himself, and discover him to all the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to God, and his loyalty to his prince (in both which he was suspected to be a pretender) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that who would might look into his heart.

3. He solemnly protests his sincerity, ver. 1. *I have walked in mine integrity*, i. e. my conversation has agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another. It is in vain to boast of our integrity, unless we can make it out, that by the grace of God we have walked in our integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and godly sincerity.

He produceth here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord, as his righteous Judge, who would patronize and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance, that he should come off with reputation, *therefore I shall not slide*; that they should not prevail, who consulted to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blemish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, *Psal. lxii. 4*. They that are sincere in religion, may trust in God that they shall not slide, i. e. that they shall not apostatize from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, ver. 3. (1.) He aimed at God's favour as his end, and chief good. (1.) *Thy loving kindness is before mine eyes*. This will be a good evidence of our sincerity; if what we do in religion, we do

from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings, and the best of friends and benefactors; and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which we have had experience of all our days. If we set God's loving kindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being *followers of him that is good* in his goodness, 1 *Pet.* iii. 13. If we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing any thing to forfeit God's favour, and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love. This will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it. (2.) He governed himself by the word of God as his rule. *I have walked in thy truth, i. e.* according to thy law, for thy law is truth. Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's loving kindness that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon them. Some understand it of his conforming himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and loving kindness. Those certainly walk well that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, *ver.* 4, 5. By this it appeared he was truly loyal to his prince, that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those *sons of Belial that despised him*, 1 *Sam.* x. 27. He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, no not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those that he had any reason to think were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies, or false friends, to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company, is both a good evidence of our integrity, and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here, (1.) That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take. *I have not sat with them, and I will not go in with them.* Note, Our good practices hitherto are then evidences of our integrity, when they are accompanied with resolutions in God's strength to persevere in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of, when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto. (2.) That David shunned the company not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety, and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more pernicious of the two to a good man, because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity, as against that of downright wickedness. (3.) That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any other, and as much to be shunned, in prudence as well as piety. Evil doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares, but they *dissemble; when they speak fair, believe them not.* (4.) Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not go in with them, *i. e.* he would not chuse such for his companions, nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them; he might light in with them, but he would not by appointment and assignation go in with them: Or, if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them, *i. e.* he would not continue with them; he would be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary; he would not concur with them, not say as they said, nor do as they did, as they that *sit in the seat of the scornful*, *Psal.* i. 1. He would not sit in counsel with them upon ways and means to do mischief, nor sit in judgment with them to condemn the generation of the righteous. (5.) We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and affections we must have an aversion to it. David here saith, not only *I have shunned it*, but *I have hated it*, *Psal.* cxxxix. 21. (6.) The congregation of evil doers: The club, the confederacy of them is in a special manner hateful to good people. I have hated the church of the malignant (*Ecclesiam malignantium*) so the vulgar Latin reads it. As good men in consort make one another better, and are enabled to do so much the more good, so bad men in combination make one another worse, and do so much the more mischief. In all this David was both a type of Christ, who, tho' he received sinners, and eat with them, to instruct them, and do them good; yet otherwise was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the Pharisees those dissemblers; and an example to christians, when they join themselves to Christ, to *save themselves from this untoward generation*, *Acts* ii. 40.

6. I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD. 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. 8. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place

where thine honour dwelleth. 9. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: In whose hands is mischief: and their right hand is full of bribes. 11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me. 12. My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

In these verses,

1. David produceth a further evidence of his integrity, which was the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, and the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attending on God's ordinances, the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican; but it is a good sign of sincerity, if we attend upon them, as David here tells us he did, *ver.* 6, 7, 8.

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances. *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the place he had among those that compassed God's altar. *I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome.* This is like that, 1 *Cor.* xi. 28. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat: so prepared. This notes (1.) Habitual preparation; *I will wash my hands in innocency, i. e.* I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those dead works which defile it, and forbid my drawing nigh to God. See *Psal.* xxiv. 3, 4. (2.) Actual preparation: It alludes to the ceremony of the priests washing, when they went in to minister, *Exod.* xxx. 20, 21. Tho' David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparations for solemn ordinances, we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reigning infidelity and hypocrisy, and to protest our innocency of that, (which was signified by *washing the hands*, *Deut.* xxi. 6.) but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity, by renewing our repentance, and making a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences, for the purifying and pacifying of them. He that is washed, that is in a justified state, has need thus to *wash his feet*, *Joh.* xiii. 10. to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency; he that is penitent is (*pene innocens*) almost innocent, and he that is pardoned is so far innocent, that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them: *I will compass thine altar*, alluding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering, walked round the altar, and probably the offerers likewise did so at some distance, noting a diligent regard to what was done, and a dutiful attendance on the service. *I will compass it, i. e.* I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them. David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, yet thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars, and could find time for that attendance. Note, (1.) All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands, and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our altar, not as the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of, and *live upon*, *Heb.* xiii. 10. (2.) It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed, and to see ourselves among them that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances, he aimed at the glory of God, and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the place of worship, as the place where God's honour dwelt, *ver.* 8. and therefore made it his business there to honour God, and to give him the glory due to his name; to publish with the voice of thanksgiving, all God's wondrous works: God's gracious works, which call for our thanksgiving, are all wondrous works, which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them, and tell of them for his glory, and the excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving, as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all ways possible to acknowledge with gratitude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight, and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this he appeals to God, Lord, thou knowest how dearly *I have loved the habitation of thy house*, *ver.* 8. *i. e.* the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people, and receive their homage, the place where thine honour dwells. David was sometimes forced by persecution into the countries of idolaters, and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors, that laid him under that restraint, did themselves upbraid him with as his crime. See 1 *Sam.* xx. 27. But, Lord, saith he, tho' I cannot come to the habitation of thine house, I love it, my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there. Note, All that truly love God, truly love the ordinances of God, and therefore love them, be-
cause

cause in them he manifests his honour, and they have an opportunity of honouring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him: he loved the habitation of his house, i. e. his church among men, loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it. And those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching to him, as the thing itself is a constant pleasure, so it is to them a comfortable evidence of their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

2. David having given proofs of his integrity, doth with a humble confidence towards God, (such as they have whose hearts condemn them not) earnestly pray that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked, *ver. 9, 10. Gather not my soul with sinners.* Here (1.) David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable, that he could not with the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. They are bloody men, that thirst after blood, and lie under a great deal of the guilt of blood. They do mischief, and mischief is always in their hands: tho' they get by their wickedness, for their right hand is full of bribes, which they have taken to pervert justice; yet that will make their case never the better, for *what is a man profited if he gain the world, and lose his soul?* (2.) He dreads having his lot with them; he never loved them, nor associated with them in this world, and therefore could in faith pray, that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered, to return to God that gave them, and will call for them again. See *Job xxxiv. 14.* It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints, or with sinners; whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are, *1 Sam. xxv. 29.* or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, *Matth. xiii. 30.* Death gathers us to our people; those that are our people while we live, whom we chuse to associate with, and with whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot to eternity. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, David dreaded dying the death of the wicked; so that both sides are of that mind, which if we be of, and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor eat of their dainties, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

3. David with a holy humble confidence commits himself to the grace of God, *ver. 11, 12.* (1.) He promiseth that by the grace of God he would persevere in his duty: *As for me, whatever others do, I will walk in mine integrity.* Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us, that we have walked in our integrity, is comfortable to us, that should confirm our resolutions to continue therein. (2.) He prays for the divine grace both to enable to do so, and to give him the comfort of it: Redeem me out of the hands of my enemies, and be merciful to me, living and dying. Be we never so confident of our integrity, yet still we must rely upon God's mercy, and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them. (3.) He pleaseth himself with his steadiness: *My foot stands in an even place,* where I shall not stumble, and whence I shall not fall. This he speaks as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world; and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world. (4.) He promiseth himself that he should yet have occasion to praise the Lord; that he should be furnished with matter for praise, that he should have a heart for praises, and that tho' he was now perhaps banished from publick ordinances, yet he should again have an opportunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evil doers, shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous, and join with them in praising God; and it is pleasant doing that in good company, the more the better, it is the liker to heaven.

P S A L M XXVII.

Some think David penned this psalm before his coming to the throne, when he was in the midst of his troubles, and perhaps upon occasion of the death of his parents; but the Jews think he penned it when he was old, upon occasion of that wonderful deliverance he had from the sword of the giant, when Abishai succoured him, *2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17.* and his people thereupon resolved he should never venture his life again in battle, lest he should quench the light of Israel. Perhaps it was not penned upon any particular occasion, but it is very expressive of the pious and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out towards God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is (1.) The courage and holy bravery of his faith, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* (2.) The complacency he took in communion with God, and the benefit he experienced by it, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* (3.) His desire towards God, and his favour and grace, *ver. 7—9, 11, 12.* (4.) His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others

to hope in him, *ver. 10, 13, 14.* And let our hearts be thus affected in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE LORD is my light, and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? 2. When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came upon me, to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. 4. One thing have I desired of the LORD that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. 5. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me up upon a rock. 6. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy, I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

We may observe here,

1. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him. (1.) *The Lord is my light.* David's subjects called him the light of Israel, *2 Sam. xxi. 17.* And he was indeed a burning and a shining light; but he owns that he shone as the moon doth with a borrowed light; what light God darted upon him, reflected upon them; *the Lord is my light.* God is a light to his people to shew them the way when they are in doubt; to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever. (2.) He is my salvation, in whom I am safe, and by whom I shall be saved. (3.) He is *the strength of my life*: not only the protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the strength of my frail, weak, life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away. God that is a believer's life, is the strength of his life: not only by whom, but in whom he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen then ourselves.

2. With what an undaunted courage he triumphs over his enemies: no fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? *Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?* If omnipotence be his guard, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his light, he fears no shades; if God be his salvation, he fears no colours. He triumphs over his enemies that were already routed, *ver. 2.* His enemies came upon him to eat up his flesh; aiming at no less, and assured of that; but they fell; not, he smote them, and they fell; but they stumbled and fell, they were so confounded and weakned that they could not go on with their enterprize. Thus they that came to take Christ, with a word's speaking were made to stagger and fall to the ground, *Joh. xviii. 6.* The ruin of some of the enemies of God's people, is an earnest of the compleat conquest of them all. And therefore these being fallen he is fearless of the rest; tho' they be numerous, an host of them; tho' they be daring, and their attempts threatening; tho' they encamp against me, an army against one man; tho' they wage war upon me, yet my heart shall not fear. Hosts cannot hurt us, if the Lord of hosts protect us: nay, in this assurance that God is for me, *I will be confident.* Two things he will be confident of; (1.) That he shall be safe, if God is my salvation, *in the time of trouble he shall hide me,* i. e. He shall set me out of danger, and above the fear of it. God will not only find out a shelter for his people in distress, as he did, *Jer. xxxvi. 26.* but he will himself be their hiding-place, *Psal. xxxii. 7.* His providence shall, it may be, keep them safe; however his grace shall make them easy. His name is the strong tower into which by faith they run, *Prov. xviii. 10.* He shall hide me, not in the strong holds of En-gedi, *1 Sam. xxiii. 29.* but in the secret of his tabernacle. The gracious presence of God with him, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people, these are the secret of his tabernacle; and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes; nay, it sets them up upon a rock on high, where the raging, threatening billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them: it is a rock that is *higher than we,* *Psal. lxi. 2.* (2.) That he shall be victorious, *ver. 6.* Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies, not only so as that they cannot reach it with their darts, but so as that I shall be exalted to bear rule over them. David here by faith in the promise of God triumphs before

before the victory; and is as sure not only of the laurel, but of the crown, as if it were already upon his head.

3. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, *ver. 4.* It greatly encouraged his confidence in God, that he was conscious to himself of an entire affection to God and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element when in the way of his duty, and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with him. If our hearts can witness for us that we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own. Or, it may be taken thus. He desired to dwell in the house of the Lord, that there he might be safe from the enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he doth not say, *one thing have I desired*, in order to my safety, that I may have my army augmented to such a number, or that I may be master of such a city or such a castle; but that *I may dwell in the house of the Lord*, and then I am well.

Observe, (1.) What it is he desires: *to dwell in the house of the Lord.* In the courts of God's house the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. As disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was, would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging among them. Or rather, he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the publick service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required. And therefore he longed to see an end of the wars, in which he was now engaged, not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for that constant attendance in God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health, not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might *go up to the house of the Lord*, Isa. xxxviii. 22. Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry but for a night; or to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abideth not in the house for ever; but to dwell there all the days of their life; for there the Son abideth ever. Do we hope that the praising God will be the blessedness of our eternity? Surely then we ought to make it the business of our time.

(2.) How earnestly he covets this: this is the *one thing I have desired of the Lord*, and which I will seek after. If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should be it; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift, and a token of his favour. And having fixed his desire upon this as the one thing needful, he sought after it, *i. e.* he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affairs so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, They that truly desire communion with God, will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, *Prov. xviii. 1.*

(3.) What he had in his eye in it: he would dwell in God's house, not for the plenty of good entertainment that was there in the feasts upon the sacrifices, not for the musick and good singing that was there, but *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.* He desired to attend in God's courts, (1.) That he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God; he knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the Divine Being and perfections, his holiness is his beauty, *Psal. cx. 3.* His goodness is his beauty, *Zech. ix. 17.* The harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love we with pleasure behold this beauty, and observe more and more in it that is amiable, that is admirable; when with fixedness of thought, and a holy flame of devout affections, we contemplate God's glorious excellencies, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us; this is that view of the beauty of the Lord, which David here covets, and it is to be had in his ordinances; for there he manifests himself. (2.) That he might have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would *enquire in God's temple*; Lord, *what wilt thou have me to do?* For the sake of these two things, he desired that one thing, *to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life*; for blessed are they that do so, they will be still praising him, *Psal. lxxxiv. 4.* both in speaking to him, and in hearing from him. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word, Christ calls the one thing needful and the good part.

(4.) What advantage he promised himself by it, could he but have a place in God's house. (1.) There he should be quiet and easy: there troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles would not reach him, for he should be set on high, *ver. 5.* Joash, one of David's seed, was hid in the house of the Lord six years, and there not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, *2 Kings xi. 3.* The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, *Neh. vi. 10.* But the safety of believers is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple; and their comfort in communion with him. (2.) There he should be pleasant and merry: there he would offer sacrifice of joy, *ver. 6.* For

God's work is its own wages: there *he would sing, yea, he would sing praises to the Lord.* Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy, ought to be the matter of our praise. And when we attend upon God in holy ordinances, we ought to be much in joy and praise. It is for the glory of our God that we should sing in his ways. And whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praises. *Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph, 2 Cor. ii. 14.*

7. Hear, O LORD, *when I cry with my voice*: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8. *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face: my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. 9. Hide not thy face far from me, put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. 10. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. 11. Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. 12. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. 13. *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

David in these verses expresses,

1. His desire towards God in many petitions: if he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord, yet wherever he is he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer. (1.) He humbly bespeaks, because he firmly believes he shall have a gracious audience, *hear, O Lord, when I cry*, not only with my heart, but as one in earnest with my voice too; and an answer of peace, which he expects not from his own merit, but God's goodness. *Have mercy upon me, and answer me, ver. 7.* If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.

(2.) He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to his duty, *ver. 8.* It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance unless he *hold forth to us the golden scepter.* David therefore going to pray, doth in his thoughts fasten upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and doth as it were reverently touch the top of the golden scepter which was thereby held out to him. *My heart said unto thee*, (so it begins in the original) or, of thee, Seek ye my face; he first revolved that, and preached that over again to himself, (and that is the best preaching, it is hearing twice what God speaks once) thou saidst, (so it may be supplied,) seek ye my face; and then he returns what he had so meditated upon in this pious resolution, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* Observe here, (1.) The true nature of religious worship, it is seeking the face of God; this it is in God's precept, *seek ye my face.* He would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good: and this it is in the saint's purpose and desire, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, and nothing less will I take up with. The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things, *Psal. cxlv. 16.* but it is only the shining of his face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* (2.) The kind invitation of a gracious God to this duty, thou saidst, Seek ye my face, it is not only a permission but a precept; and his commanding us to seek implies a promise of finding, for he is too kind to say, *seek ye me in vain.* God calls us to seek his face in our conversion to him, and in our converse with him. He calls us by the whispers of his Spirit, to and with our spirits, to seek his face; calls us by his word, by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities, God is in love to us calling us in him to seek our own mercies. (3.) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation: the call is presently returned, *my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* The call was general, seek ye my face; but, like David, we must apply to it to ourselves, I will seek it. The word doth us no good when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, *Seek ye my face*; the answer is express, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*: like that, *Jer. iii. 22. Behold, we come unto thee.* A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

(3.) He is very particular in his requests,

1. For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that, *ver. 9. Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, in obedience to thy command, therefore *hide not thy face from me*, *i. e.* Let me never want the reviving sense of thy favour. Love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; *put not thy servant away in anger.* He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs, that however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell, but that?

2. For

2. For the continuance of his presence with him: thou hast been my help formerly, and *thou art the God of my salvation*; and therefore whither shall I go but to thee? *O leave me not, neither forsake me*, withdraw not the operations of thy power from me; for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good will to me, for then I am comfortless.

3. For the benefit of a divine conduct, *ver. 11. Teach me thy way, O Lord*, i. e. Give me to understand the meaning of thy providences towards me, and make them plain to me. And give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mistake it, but may walk rightly, and that I may not do it with hesitation, but may walk surely. It is not policy but plainness, that is, downright honesty, that will direct us into, and keep us in, the way of our duty. He begs to be guided in a plain path, because of his enemies; or, as the margin reads it, his observers. His enemies watched for his halting, that they might find occasion against him. Saul eyed David, *1 Sam. xviii. 9.* This quickened him to pray, Lord, lead me in a plain path, that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge.

(4.) For the benefit of a divine protection, *ver. 12. Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies.* Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less, and in such a way, as that I have no fence against them, but thy power over their consciences; for *false witnesses are risen up against me*, that aim further than to take away my reputation or estate, for they breathe out cruelty, it is the blood, the precious blood, they thirst after. Herein David was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty, but tho' he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over to their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

2. He expresseth his dependence upon God,

1. That he would help and succour him when all other helps and succours failed him, *ver. 10. When my father and my mother forsake me*, i. e. the nearest and dearest friends I have in the world, from whom I may expect most relief, and with most reason, when they either die, or are at a distance from me, or are disabled to help me in the time of need, or are unkind to me, or unmindful of me, and will not help me, when I am as helpless as ever poor orphan was, that was left fatherless and motherless, then I know *the Lord will take me up*, as a poor wandering sheep is taken up, and saved from perishing. His time to help those that trust in him, is when all other helpers fail, when it is most for his honour and their comfort: with him the fatherless find mercy. This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the special care of the divine providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them, that way that one would not have expected it. God is a surer and better friend than our earthly parents are or can be.

2. That in due time he should see the displays of his goodness, *ver. 13. He believed he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*, and if he had not done so he should have fainted under his afflictions. Even the best saints are subject to faint, when their troubles become grievous and tedious: their spirits are overwhelmed, and their flesh and heart fail, but then faith is a sovereign cordial, it keeps them from desponding under their burthen, and despair of relief, keeps them hoping and praying, and waiting, and keeps up in them good thoughts of God, and the comfortable enjoyment of themselves. But what was it, the belief of which kept David from fainting? *That he should see the goodness of the Lord*, which now seemed at a distance. They that walk by faith, in the goodness of the Lord, shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. This he hopes to see in the land of the living, i. e. (1.) In this world, that he should out-live his troubles, and not perish under them. It is his comfort not so much that he shall see the land of the living, as that he shall see the goodness of God in it, for that is the comfort of all creature-comforts to a gracious soul. (2.) In the land of Canaan, and in Jerusalem, where the lively oracles were; in comparison with the heathen that were dead in sin, the land of Israel might fitly be called the land of the living; there God was known, and there David hoped to see his goodness, see *2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.* Or, (3.) In Heaven. It is that land alone that may truly be called the land of the living, where there is no more death, this earth is the land of the dying. Nothing like the believing hope of eternal life, the fore-sights of that glory, and foretastes of those pleasures to keep us from fainting under all the calamities of this present time.

3. That in the mean time he should be strengthened to bear up under his burthens, *ver. 14. whether he saith it to himself or to his friends*, it comes all to one, this is that which encourageth him. He shall strengthen thy heart, shall sustain the spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength, (1.) Keep close to God, and to your duty. Wait on the Lord, by faith and prayer, and a humble resignation to his will, *wait, I say, on the Lord*, whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God. (2.) Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties. *Be of good courage*: let your hearts be fixed trusting in God, and your minds

stayed upon him; and then let none of these things move you. They that wait upon the Lord have reason to be of good courage.

P S A L M XXVIII.

The former part of this psalm is the prayer of a saint militant, and now in distress, 1—3. to which is added the doxology of God's implacable enemies, ver. 4, 5. The latter part of the psalm is the thanksgiving of a saint triumphant, and delivered out of his distresses, ver. 6, 7, 8. to which is added a prophetic prayer for all God's faithful loyal subjects, ver. 9. So that it is hard to say which of these two conditions David was in when he penned it. Some think he was now in trouble seeking God, but at the same time preparing to praise him for his deliverance, and by faith giving him thanks for it, before it was wrought. Others think he was now in triumph, but remembered and recorded for his own and others benefit the prayers he made when he was in affliction, that the mercy might relish the better, when it appeared to be an answer to them.

¶ A psalm of David.

1. **U**NTO thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock; be not silent to me: lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. 2. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee: when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle. 3. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity: which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. 4. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands, render to them their desert. 5. Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them; and not build them up.

In these verses David is very earnest in prayer.

1. He prays that God would graciously hear and answer him, now in his distress he called upon him, *ver. 1, 2.* Observe his faith in prayer; *O Lord, my rock*; noting his belief of God's power; he is a rock, and his dependence upon that power, he is my rock, on whom I build my hope. Observe his fervency in prayer, *to thee will I cry*, as one in earnest, being ready to sink unless thou come in with seasonable succour. And observe how solicitous he is to obtain an answer. Be not silent to me, as one angry at my prayers, *Psal. lxxx. 4.* Lord, speak to me, answer me *with good words, and comfortable words*, *Zech. i. 13.* Tho' the thing I pray for be not given in, yet let God speak to me joy and gladness, and make me to hear it. Lord, speak for me, in answer to my prayers; plead my cause, command deliverances for me, and thus hear and answer the voice of my supplications.

Two things he pleads; (1.) The sad despair he should be in if God slighted him; if thou be silent to me, and I have not the tokens of thy favour, I am like them that go down into the pit, i. e. I am a dead man, lost and undone; if God be not my friend, appear not to me, and appear not for me, my hope and my help is perished. Nothing can be so cutting, so killing, to a gracious soul as the want of God's favour, and the sense of his displeasure. *I shall be like them that go down to hell*, (so some understand it) for what is the misery of the damned but this, that God is for ever silent to them, and deaf to their cry. Those are in some measure qualified for God's favour, and may expect it, who are thus possessed with a dread of his wrath, and to whom his frowns are worse than death. (2.) The good hopes he had that God would favour him. *I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle*; which notes, not only an earnest desire, but an earnest expectation from thence to receive an answer of peace. The most holy place within the veil is here, as elsewhere, called the oracle, there the ark and the mercy-seat were, there God was said to dwell between the cherubims, and thence he spake to his people, *Numb. vii. 89.* That was a type of Christ, and it is to him that we must lift up our eyes and hands, for through him all good comes from God to us. It was also a figure of heaven, *Heb. ix. 24.* And from God as our Father in heaven, we are taught to expect an answer to our prayers. The scriptures are called the oracles of God, and to them we must have an eye in our prayers and expectations. There is the word on which God hath caused and encouraged us to hope.

2. He deprecates the doom of wicked people, as before, *Psal. xxvi. 9. Gather not my soul with sinners.* Lord, I attend thy holy oracle, *draw me not away from that with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity*, *ver. 3.* that is, 1. Save me from being entangled in the snares they have laid for me; they flatter and cajole me, and speak peace to me, but they have a design upon

me, for mischief is in their heart, they aim to disturb me, nay, to destroy me; Lord, suffer me not to be drawn away and ruined by their cursed plots; for they have, can have, no power, no success against me, except it be given them from above. 2. Save me from being infected with their sins, and from doing as they do: Let me not be drawn away by their fallacious arguments, or their allurements, from thy holy oracle, where I desire to dwell all the days of my life, to practise any wicked works, see *Psal. cxli. 4.* Lord, never leave me to myself to use such arts of deceit and treachery for my safety, as they use for my ruin. Let no event of providence be an invincible temptation to me, to draw me either to the imitation, or into the interest, of wicked people. Good men dread the way of sinners; the best are sensible of the danger they are in of being drawn aside into it; and therefore we should all pray earnestly to God for his grace to keep us in our integrity. 3. Save me from being involved in their doom; let not me be led forth with the workers of iniquity, for I am none of them that speak peace while war is in their hearts. Note, Those that are careful not to partake with sinners in their sins, have reason to hope that they shall not partake with them in their plagues, *Rev. xviii. 4.*

3. He imprecates the just judgment of God upon the workers of iniquity, *ver. 4. Give them according to their deeds.* This is not the language of passion or revenge; nor is it inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. But, (1.) Thus he would shew how far he was from complying with the workers of iniquity, and with what good reason he had begged not to be drawn away with them, because he was convinced that they could not be made more miserable, than to be dealt with according to their deeds. (2.) Thus he would express his zeal for the honour of God's justice in governing the world. Lord, they think all well they do, and justify themselves in their wicked practices, Lord, *give them after the work of their hands*, and so undeceive those about them, who think there is no harm in what they do, because it goes unpunished, *Psal. xciv. 1, 2.* (3.) This prayer is a prophecy, that God will sooner or later render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. If what be done amiss be not undone by repentance, there will certainly come a reckoning day, when God will render to every man who persists in his evil deeds, according to them. It is a prophecy particularly of the destruction of destroyers. They speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts; Lord, *give them according to their deeds*, let the spoilers be spoiled, and let them be treacherously dealt with, who have thus dealt treacherously, see *Isa. xxxiii. 1.* and *Rev. xviii. 4.—xiii. 10.* Observe, He foretels, that God will reward them not only according to their deeds, but according to the wickedness of their endeavours; for sinners shall be reckoned with not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they would have done, which they designed, and did what they could to effect. And if God go by this rule in dealing with the wicked, sure he will do so in dealing with the righteous, and will reward them not only for the good they have done, but for the good they have endeavoured to do, tho' they could not compass it.

4. He foretels their destruction for their contempt of God, and his hand, *ver. 5. Because they regard not the works of the Lord*, and the operation of his hands, by which he manifests himself, and speaks to the children of men; he shall destroy them in this world and in the other, and not build them up. Note, a stupid regardlessness of the works of God, is the cause of the sin of sinners, and so becomes the cause of their ruin. Why do men question the being or attributes of God, but because they do not duly regard his handy works which declare his glory, and in which the invisible things of him are clearly seen? Why do men forget God, and live without him; nay affront God and live in rebellion against him, but because they consider not the instances of that wrath of his, which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them, and devise mischief against them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for his church, by which he has made it appear how dear it is to him, see *Isa. v. 12.*

In singing this, we must arm ourselves against all temptations to join with the workers of iniquity; and animate ourselves against all the troubles we may be threatened with by the workers of iniquity.

6. Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. 7. The LORD is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him. 8. The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. 9. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

In these verses,

1. David gives God thanks for the audience of his prayers, as affectionately as a few verses before he had begged it, *ver. 6. Blessed be the Lord.* How soon are the saints sorrows turned into songs, and their prayers into praises! It was in faith that David prayed, *ver. 2. Hear the voice of my supplications:* and by the same faith he gives thanks, *ver. 6. that God had heard the voice of my supplications.* Note, (1.) They that pray in faith, may rejoice in hope. He hath heard me, *i. e.* graciously accepted me, and I am as sure of a real answer, as if I had it already. (2.) What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise; hath God heard our supplications, let us then bless his name.

2. He encourageth himself to hope in God for the perfecting of every thing that concerned him: having given to God the glory of his grace, *ver. 6.* He is humbly bold to take the comfort of it, *ver. 7.* This is the method of attaining peace, let it begin with praise that it is attainable. Let us first bless God, and then bless ourselves. Observe, (1.) His dependence upon God: The Lord is my strength to support me, and carry me on through all my services and sufferings. He is my shield to protect me from all the malicious designs of my enemies against me. I have chosen him to be so, I have always found him so, and I expect he will still be so. (2.) His experience of the benefit of that dependence: My heart trusted in him, and in his power and promise, and it has not been in vain to do so, for I am helped, I have been helped many a time; not only God has given in to me in his due time the help I trusted to him for, but my very trust in him, has helped me in the mean time and kept me from fainting, *Psal. xxvii. 13.* The very actings of faith are present aids to a drooping spirit, and help it many a time at a dead lift. (3.) His improvement of this experience: He had the pleasure of it, therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth. The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while in the laughter of the fool the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The heart that truly believes, shall in due time greatly rejoice; it is joy and peace in believing that we are to expect. God shall have the praise of it; when *my heart greatly rejoiceth, with my song will I praise him.* Thus must we express our gratitude, it is the least we can do; and others will hereby be invited and encouraged to trust in him too.

3. He pleaseth himself with the interest which all good people through Christ have in God, *ver. 8. The Lord is their strength;* Not mine only, but the strength of every believer. Note, The saints rejoice in their friends comforts as well as their own; for as we have not the less benefit by the light of the sun, so neither by the light of God's countenance, for others sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all, and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours; Christ their Lord and ours, *1 Cor. i. 2.* He is their strength, the strength of all Israel, because he is the saving strength of his anointed, *i. e.* (1.) Of David in the type: God in strengthening him that was their king and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself God's anointed, because it was the unction he had received that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore entitled him to the divine protection. (2.) Of Christ, his anointed, his Messiah, in the anti-type. God was his saving strength, qualified him for his undertaking, and carried him through it, see *Psal. lxxxix. 21. Isa. xlix. 5.—l. 7, 9.* And so he becomes their strength, the strength of all the saints; he strengthened him that is the church's head, and from him diffuseth strength to all the members; he commanded his strength, and so *strengthens what he has wrought for us*, *Psal. lxviii. 28.* see *Psal. lxxx. 17, 18.*

4. He concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer for the church of God, *ver. 9.* He prays for Israel, not as his people, save my people, and bless mine inheritance, tho' they were so, but thine. God's interest in them lay nearer his heart than his own; *We are thy people*, is a good plea, *Isa. lxiv. 9.—lxiii. 19. I am thine, save me.* God's people are his inheritance, dear to him, and precious in his eyes; what little glory he has from this world, he has it from them. *The Lord's portion is his people.* That which he begs of God for them, is, (1.) That he would save them from their enemies, and the dangers they were exposed to. (2.) That he would bless them with all good flowing from his favour, in performance of his promise, and amounting to a happiness for them. (3.) That he would feed them: bless them with plenty, and especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul. Rule them, so the margin. Direct their counsels and actions aright, and over-rule their affairs for good. Feed them and rule them, *i. e.* set pastors, set rulers over them, that shall do their office with wisdom and understanding. (4.) That he would lift them up for ever; lift them up out of their troubles and distresses; and do this not only for those of that age, but for his people in every age to come, even to the end. Lift them up into thy glorious kingdom, lift them up as high as heaven. There, and there only, will the saints be lifted up for ever, never more to sink or be depressed. Observe, Those, and those only, whom God feeds and rules, that are willing to be taught, and guided, and governed, by him, shall be saved, and blessed, and lifted up for ever.

P S A L M XXIX.

It is the probable conjecture of some very good interpreters, that David penned this psalm upon occasion, and just at the time of a great storm of thunder, lightning, and rain; as the eighth psalm was his meditation in a moon-shine night, and the nineteenth in a sun-shine morning. It is good to take occasion from the sensible operations of God's power in the kingdom of nature, to give glory to him. So composed was David, and so chearful even in a dreadful tempest, when others trembled, that then he penned this psalm; for tho' the earth be removed, yet will we not fear. (1.) He calls upon the great ones of the world to give glory to God, ver. 1, 2. (2.) To convince them of the greatness of that God, whom they were to adore, he takes notice of his power and terror in the thunder and lightning, and thunder showers, ver. 3—6. His sovereign dominion over the world, ver. 10. And his special favour to his church, ver. 11. Great and high thoughts of God should fill us in singing this psalm.

¶ A psalm of David.

1. **G**IVE unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 3. The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundreth, the LORD is upon many waters. 4. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. 5. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars: yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. 6. He maketh them also to skip like a calf: Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. 7. The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire: 8. The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness: the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. 9. The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. 10. The LORD sitteth upon the flood: yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever. 11. The LORD will give strength unto his people, the LORD will bless his people with peace.

In this psalm we have,

1. A demand of the homage of the great men of the earth to be paid to the great God: Every clap of thunder David interpreted as a call to himself and other princes to give glory to the great God. Observe, (1.) Who they are that are called to this duty; *O ye mighty*, ver. 1. ye sons of the mighty; that have power, and on whom that power is devolved by succession and inheritance, that have royal blood running in your veins. It is much for the honour of the great God, that the great men of this world should pay their homage to him; and they are bound to do it, not only because as high as they are, he is infinitely above them, and therefore they must vail to him; but because they have their power from him, and are to use it for him, and this tribute of acknowledgment they owe to him for it. (2.) How often this call is repeated; *Give unto the Lord*, and again, and a third time, *Give unto the Lord*. This intimates, that the mighty men are backward to this duty, and are hardly persuaded to it; but that it is of great consequence to the interests of God's kingdom among men, that princes should heartily espouse them. Jerusalem flourishes when the *kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it*, Rev. xxi. 24. (3.) What they are called to: To give unto the Lord; not as if he needed any thing, or could be benefited by any gifts of ours, as if we had any thing to give him that is not his own already, *Who hath first given to him?* but the recognition of his glory, and of his dominion over us, he is pleased to interpret as a gift to him. *Give unto the Lord*, your ownelves in the first place, and then your services; *give unto the Lord glory and strength*, i.e. acknowledge his glory and strength, and give praise to him as a God of infinite majesty, and irresistible power; and what glory and strength he has by his providence intrusted you with, offer it to him, to be used for his honour in his service. Give him your crowns, let them be laid at his feet; give him your scepters, your swords, your keys, put all into his hand, that you in the use of them may be to him for a name and a praise. Princes value themselves by their glory and strength, these they must ascribe to God, owning him to be infinitely more glorious and powerful than they.

This demand of homage from the mighty, may be looked upon as directed either to the grandees of David's own kingdom, the peers of the realm, the princes of the tribes, and it is to

excite them to a more diligent and constant attendance at God's altars, in which he had observed them very remiss; or to the neighbouring kings whom he by his sword had made tributaries to Israel, and now would persuade to become tributaries to the God of Israel. Crowned heads must bow before the King of kings. What is here said to the mighty, is said to all, worship God, it is the sum and substance of the everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Now we have here, (1.) The nature of religious worship, it is *giving to the Lord the glory due to his name*, ver. 2. God's name is that whereby he has made himself known. There is a glory due to his name; it is impossible we should give him all the glory due to his name; when we have said and done our best for the honour of God's name, still we come infinitely short of the merit of the subject: but when we answer that revelation which he has made of himself with suitable affections and adorations, then we give him some of that glory which is due to his name. If we would in hearing and praying, and other acts of devotion, receive grace from God, we must make it our business to give glory to God. (2.) The rule of the performance of religious exercises; *Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*. Which speaks, (1.) The object of our worship; the glorious majesty of God is called the beauty of holiness, 2 Chron. xx. 21. In the worship of God we must have an eye to his beauty, and adore him not only as infinitely awful, and therefore to be feared above all, but as infinitely amiable, and therefore to be loved and delighted in above all; especially we must have an eye to the beauty of his holiness; this the angels fasten upon in their praises, Rev. iv. 8. Or, (2.) The place of worship. The sanctuary then was the *beauty of holiness*, Psal. xlviii. 1, 2. Jer. xvii. 12. The beauty of the sanctuary was the exact agreeableness of the worship there performed with the divine appointment; the pattern in the mount. Now under the gospel solemn assemblies of christians (which purity is the beauty of) are the places where God is to be worshipped. Or, (3.) The manner of worship. We must be holy in all our religious performances, i.e. devoted to God, and to his will and glory. There is a beauty in holiness, and it is that that puts an acceptable beauty upon all the acts of worship.

2. Good reason given for this demand. We shall see ourselves bound to give glory to God if we consider, (1.) His sufficiency in himself, intimated in his name *Jehovah, I am, that I am*, which is repeated here no less than eighteen times in this short psalm, twice in every verse but three, and once in two of those three; I think there is not the like in all the book of psalms. Let the mighty ones of the earth know him by this name, and give him the glory due to it. (2.) His sovereignty over all things. Let those that rule over men, know there is a God that rules over them, that rules over all. The psalmist here sets forth God's dominion.

1. In the kingdom of nature: In the wonderful effects of natural causes, and the operations of the powers of nature, we ought to take notice of God's glory and strength, which we are called upon to ascribe to him; in the thunder, and lightning, and rain, we may see,

(1.) His glory. It is the God of glory that thundreth, ver. 3. It is God that thunders, it is the *noise of his voice*, Job xxxvii. 2. and it speaks him a God of glory; so awful is the sound of the thunder, and so bright the flash of its companion the lightning; to the hearing, and to the sight, nothing more affecting than these, as if by those two learning senses God would give such proofs of his glory to the minds of men, as should leave the most stupid inexcusable. And some observe, that there were then some particular reasons why thunder should be called the voice of the Lord, not only because it comes from above, is not under the direction or foresight of any man, speaks loud, and reaches far; but because God often spake in thunder, particularly at mount Sinai, and by thunder discomfited the enemies of Israel. To speak it the voice of the God of glory, it is here said to be upon the waters, upon *many waters*, ver. 3. it reacheth over the vast ocean, the waters under the firmament, it rattles among the thick clouds, the waters that are above the firmament. Every one that hears the thunder, his ears being made to tingle with it, will own that *the voice of the Lord is full of majesty*, Psal. xxix. 4. enough to make the highest humble; for none can *thunder with a voice like him*, and the proudest tremble; for if his voice be so terrible, what is his arm? Every time we hear it thunder, let our hearts be thereby filled with great, and high, and honourable thoughts of God, in the holy adorings and admirings of whom the power of godliness doth so much consist. *O Lord our God, thou art very great*.

(2.) His power, ver. 4. *The voice of the Lord is powerful*, as appears by the effects of it; for it works wonders; they that write natural histories relate the prodigious effects of thunder and lightning, even out of the ordinary course of natural causes, which must be resolved into the omnipotence of the God of nature. (1.) Trees have been rent and split by thunder-bolts, ver. 5, 6. *The voice of the Lord* in the thunder often broke the cedars, even those of Lebanon, the strongest, the stateliest. Some understand it of the violent winds, which shook the cedars, and sometimes tore off their aspiring tops. Earthquakes also shook the ground itself on which the trees grew, and made Lebanon

and Sirion to dance, the wilderness of Kadesh also was in like manner shaken, *ver.* 8. the trees by winds, the ground by earthquakes, and both by thunder, of which I incline rather to understand it. The learned Dr Hammond understands it of the consternation and conquest of the neighbour kingdoms that warred with Israel, and opposed David, as the Syrians, whose country lay near the forest of Lebanon, the Amorites that bordered on mount Hermon, and the Moabites and Ammonites that lay about the wilderness of Kadesh. (2.) Fires have been kindled by lightnings, and houses and churches thereby consumed; hence we read of hot thunder-bolts, *Psal.* lxxviii. 48. accordingly the voice of the Lord in the thunder, is here said to *divide the flames of fire*, *ver.* 7. *i. e.* to scatter them upon the earth, as God sees fit to direct them, and do execution by them. (3.) The terror of thunder makes the hinds to calve, sooner, and some think easier, than otherwise they would. The hind is a timorous creature, and much affected with the noise of thunder; and no marvel, when sometimes proud and stout men have been made to tremble at it. The emperor Caligula would hide himself under his bed when it thundred. Horace the poet owns that he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, which he describes somewhat like this here, *lib. i. ode* 34. The thunder is said here to discover the forest, *i. e.* it so terrifies the wild beasts of the forest, that they quit the dens and thickets, in which they hid themselves, and so are discovered. Or, it throws down the trees, and so discovers the ground that was shaded by them. Whenever it thunders, let us think of this psalm; and whenever we sing this psalm, let us think of the dreadful thunder-claps we have sometimes heard, and thus bring God's word and his works together, that by both we may be directed and quickened to give unto him the glory due unto his name; and let us bless him that there is another voice of his besides this dreadful one, by which God now speaks to us, even the still small voice of his gospel, the terror of which shall not make us afraid.

2. In the kingdom of providence, *ver.* 10. God is to be praised as the governor of the world of mankind: He *sits upon the flood, he sits King for ever*. He not only sits at rest in the enjoyment of himself, but he sits as king in the throne which he has prepared in the heavens, *Psal.* ciii. 17. where he takes cognizance of, and give orders about, all the affairs of the children of men, and doth all according to his will, according to the counsel of his will. Observe, (1.) The power of his kingdom: He sits upon the flood. As he has founded the earth, so he hath founded his own throne upon the floods, *Psal.* xxiv. 2. The ebbings and flowings of this lower world, and the tosses and revolutions of the affairs in it, give not the least shake to the repose or to the counsels of the eternal mind. The opposition of his enemies is compared to the floods, *Psal.* xciii. 3, 4. but the Lord sits upon it, *i. e.* he crusheth it, conquers it, and compleats his own purposes, in despite of all the devices that are in mens hearts. The word here translated the flood, is never used but concerning Noah's flood; and therefore some think that is it that is here spoken of. God did sit upon that flood, as a judge executing the sentence of his justice upon the world of the ungodly that was swept away by it: And he still sits upon the flood, restrains the waters of Noah, that they turn not again to cover the earth, according to his promise, never to *destroy the earth any more by a flood*, *Gen.* ix. 11. *Isa.* liv. 9. (2.) The perpetuity of his kingdom: He *sits King for ever*, no period can or shall be put to his government. The administration of his kingdom is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and pursuant to his designs for eternity.

3. In the kingdom of grace: here his glory shines brightest, (1.) In the adorations he receives from the subjects of that kingdom, *ver.* 9. In his temple, where his people attend his discoveries of himself and his mind, and attend him with their praises, there doth every one speak of his glory; in the world every man sees it, or at least, may behold it afar off, *Job* xxxvi. 25. but it is only in the temple, in the church, that it is spoken of to his honour. All his works do praise him, *i. e.* they minister matter for praise, but his faints only do bless him, and speak of his glory in his works, *Psal.* cxlv. 10. (2.) In the favours he bestows upon the subjects of that kingdom, *ver.* 11. (1.) He will enable them for his service; he will give strength to his people, to fortify them against every evil work, and to furnish them for every good work; out of weakness they shall be made strong; nay, he will perfect strength in weakness. (2.) He will encourage them in his service. He will bless his people with peace. Peace is a blessing of inestimable value, which God designs for all his people. The work of righteousness is peace, great peace have they that love thy law; but much more the crown of righteousness: the end of the righteous is peace, it is endless peace. When the thunder of God's wrath shall make sinners tremble, the faints shall lift up their heads with joy.

P S A L M XXX.

This is a psalm of thanksgiving for the great deliverances which God had wrought for David, penned upon occasion of the dedi-

cating of his house of cedar, and sang in that pious solemnity, tho' there is not any thing in it that has particular reference to that occasion. Some collect from divers passages in the psalm itself, that it was penned upon his recovery from a dangerous fit of sickness, which might happen to be about the time of the dedication of his house. (1.) He here praiseth God for the deliverances he had wrought for him, *ver.* 1, 2, 3. (2.) He calls upon others to praise him too, and encourageth them to trust in him, *ver.* 4, 5. (3.) He blames himself for his former security, *ver.* 6, 7. (4.) He recollects the prayers and complaints he had made in his distress, *ver.* 8, 9, 10. And with them stirs up himself to be very thankful to God for the present comfortable change, *ver.* 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we ought to remember with thankfulness any like deliverances wrought for us, for which we must stir up ourselves to praise him, and by which we must be engaged to depend upon him.

A psalm and song, at the dedication of the house of David.

1. I WILL extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. 2. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee: and thou hast healed me. 3. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit. 4. Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. 5. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

It was the laudable practice of the pious Jews, and tho' not expressly appointed, yet allowed and accepted, when they had built a new house, to dedicate it to God, *Deut.* xx. 5. David did so, when his house was built, and he took possession of it, *2 Sam.* v. 11. for royal palaces do as much need God's protection, and are as much bound to be at his service as ordinary houses. Note, The houses we dwell in should at our first entrance upon them, be dedicated to God, as little sanctuaries. We must solemnly commit ourselves and our families, and all our family-affairs, to God's conduct and care, must pray for his presence and blessing, must devote ourselves and all ours to his glory, and must resolve both that we will put away iniquity far from our tabernacles, and that we and our houses will serve the Lord, both in the duties of family worship, and in all instances of gospel obedience. Some conjecture that this psalm was sung at the re-dedication of David's house, after he had been driven out of it by Absalom, who had defiled it with his incest, and that it is a thanksgiving for the crushing of that dangerous rebellion.

In these verses,

1. David doth himself give God thanks for the great deliverances he had wrought for him, *ver.* 1. I will extol thee, O Lord, *i. e.* I will exalt thy name, will praise thee as One high and lifted up: I will do what I can to advance the interests of thy kingdom among men. I will extol thee, for thou hast lifted me up, not only up out of the pit in which I was sinking, but up to the throne of Israel. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust. In consideration of the great things God has done to exalt us, both by his providence and by his grace, we are bound in gratitude to do all we can to extol his name, tho' the most we can do is but little.

Three things magnify David's deliverance:

(1.) That it was the defeat of his enemies: They were not suffered to triumph over him, as they would have done (tho' it is a barbarous thing) if he died of this sickness, or perished in this distress, see *Psal.* xli. 11.

(2.) That it was an answer to his prayers, *ver.* 2. I cried unto thee. All the expressions of the sense we have of our troubles should be directed to God, and every cry be a cry to him, and giving way in this manner to our grief, will ease a burthened spirit. I cried to thee, and thou hast not only heard me, but healed me, healed the distempered body, healed the disturbed and disquieted mind, healed the disordered, distracted affairs of the kingdom. It is what God glories in, I am the Lord that healeth thee, *Exod.* xv. 26. and we must give him the glory of it.

(3.) That it was the saving of his life; for he was brought to the last extremity, dropping into the grave, and ready to go down into the pit, and yet rescued and kept alive, *ver.* 3. The more imminent our dangers have been, the more eminent our deliverances have been, the more comfortable to ourselves, and the more illustrious proofs of the power and goodness of God. A life from the dead ought to be spent in extolling the God of our life.

2. He calls upon others to join with him in praise, not only for the particular favours God had bestowed upon him, but for the general tokens of his good will to all his saints, *ver.* 4. Sing

Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his. All that are truly saints, he owns for his; there is a remnant of such in this world, and from them it is expected that they sing unto him; for they are created and sanctified, made, and made saints, that they be to him for a name and a praise. His saints in heaven sing to him, Why should not those on earth be doing the same work as well as they can, in comfort with them?

1. They believe him to be a God of unspotted purity; and therefore let them sing to him. Let them *give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*, i. e. let them praise his holy name, for holiness is his memorial throughout all generations. God is a holy God; his holiness is his glory; that is the attribute which the holy angels in their praises fasten most upon, *Isa. vi. 3.* *Rev. iv. 8.* We ought to be much in the mention and remembrance of God's holiness: and holy souls can give thanks at the mention of God's holiness. It is matter of joy to the saints that God is a holy God; for then they hope he will make them holy, more holy. None of all God's perfections carries in it more terror to the wicked, nor more comfort to the godly, than his holiness. It is a good sign we are in some measure partakers of his holiness, if we can heartily rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of it.

2. They have experienced him to be a God gracious and merciful; and therefore let them sing to him.

1. We have found his frowns very short, tho' we have deserved they should have been everlasting, and that he should have been angry with us till he had consumed us, and should never have been reconciled; yet *his anger endureth but for a moment*, ver. 5. When we offend him, he is angry, but as he is slow to anger, and not soon provoked; so when he is angry, upon our repentance and humiliation, his anger is soon turned away, and he is willing to be at peace with us. If he hide his face from his own children, and suspend the wonted tokens of his favour, it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment; but he will *gather them with everlasting kindness*, *Isa. liv. 7, 8.* If weeping endure for a night, and it be a wearisome night; yet as sure as the light of the morning returns after the darkness of the night, so sure will joy and comfort return in a short time, in due time, to the people of God, for the covenant of grace is as firm as the covenant of the day. This word has often been fulfilled to us in the letter, weeping has endured for a night, but the grief has been soon over, and the grievance gone. Observe, As long as God's anger continues, so long the saints weeping continues, but if that be but for a moment, the affliction is but for a moment, and when the light of God's countenance is restored, the affliction is easily made nothing of.

2. We have found his smiles very sweet: *In his favour is life*, i. e. all good. The return of his favour to an afflicted soul is as life from the dead; nothing can be more reviving. Our happiness is bound up in God's favour, if we have that we have enough, whatever else we want. It is the life of the soul, it is spiritual life, the earnest of life eternal.

6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. 8. I cried to thee, O LORD: and unto the LORD I made supplication. 9. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? 10. Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper. 11. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness: 12. To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent: O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

We have in these verses an account of three several states that David was in successively, and of the workings of his heart towards God in each of those estates, what he said and did, and how his heart stood affected; in the first of which, we may see what we are too apt to be, and in the other two, what we should be.

1. He had long enjoyed prosperity, and then he grew secure, and over-confident of the continuance of it, ver. 6, 7. *In my prosperity*, when I was in health of body, and God had *given me rest from all mine enemies*, I said I shall never be moved, i. e. I never thought either of having my body disordered, or my government disturbed, nor had any apprehensions of danger upon any account; such compleat victories had he obtained over those that opposed him, and such a confirmed interest had he in the hearts of his people, such a firmness of mind, and such a strong constitution of body, that he thought his prosperity fixed like a mountain; yet this he ascribes not to his own wisdom or fortitude, but to the divine goodness, *Thou through thy favour hast made my mountain to stand strong*, ver. 7. He doth not look upon it as his heaven, (as worldly people do, who make

No. xl.

their

prosperity their felicity) only his mountain, it is earth still, only raised a little higher than the common level; this he thought by the favour of God would be perpetuated to him; imagining perhaps, that having had so many troubles in the beginning of his days, he had had his whole share, and should have none in his latter end; or, that God, who had given him such tokens of his favour, would never frown upon him. Note, (1.) We are very apt to dream, when things are well with us, that they will always be so, and never otherwise, *To-morrow shall be as this day*. As if we should think when the weather is once fair, that it will be ever fair; whereas nothing is more certain, than that it will change. (2.) When we see ourselves deceived in our expectations, it becomes us to reflect with shame upon our security, as our folly, as David doth here, that we may be wiser another time, and may rejoice in our prosperity, as tho' we rejoiced not, because the fashion of it passeth away.

2. On a sudden he fell into trouble, and then he prayed to God, and pleaded earnestly for relief and succour. (1.) His mountain was shaken, and he with it; it proved when he grew secure, he was least safe; *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*, in mind, body, or estate. In every change of his condition, he still kept his eye upon God, and as he ascribed his prosperity to God's favour, so in his adversity he observed the hiding of God's face to be the cause of it. If God hide his face, a good man is certainly troubled, tho' no other calamity befall him; when the sun sets, night certainly follows, and the moon and all the stars cannot make day. (2.) When his mountain was shaken, he lift up his eyes above the hills. Prayer is a salve for every sore; he made use of it accordingly. *Is any afflicted? Is any troubled? Let him pray*. Tho' God hid his face from him, yet he prayed. If God in wisdom and justice turn from us, yet it will be in us the greatest folly and injustice imaginable, if we turn from him. No, let us learn to *pray in the dark*, ver. 8. *I cried to thee, O Lord*. It seems God's withdrawals made his prayers the more vehement. We are here told (for it seems he kept account of it) (1.) What he pleaded, ver. 9. That God would be no gainer by his death: *What profit is there in my blood?* implying, that he would willingly die, if he could thereby do any real service to God or his country, *Phil. ii. 17.* but he saw not what good could be done by his dying in the bed of sickness, as might be, if he had died in the bed of honour. Lord, saith he, wilt thou sell one of thine own people for nought, and not increase thy wealth by the price? *Psal. xlv. 12.* Nay, that in his honour, God would seem to be a loser by his death; *Shall the dust praise thee?* The sanctified spirit which returns to God shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the dust which returns to the earth shall not praise him, nor declare his truth: The services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. The promises of God's covenant cannot be performed to the dust. Lord, saith David, If I die now, what will become of the promise made to me, who shall declare the truth of that? The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honour, and then we ask aright for life, when we have that in view, that we may live and praise him. (2.) What he prayed for, ver. 10. He prayed for mercy to pardon, *Have mercy upon me*, and for grace to help in time of need. *Lord, be thou my helper*. And on these two errands we also may come boldly to the throne of grace, *Heb. iv. 16.*

3. In due time God delivered him out of his troubles, and restored him to his former prosperity. His prayers were answered, and his *mourning was turned into dancing*, ver. 11. God's anger now endured but for a moment, and David's weeping but for a night. The sack-cloth with which in a humble compliance with the divine providence he had clad himself was loosed, his griefs were balanced, his fears were silenced, his comforts returned, and he was girded with gladness; joy was made his ornament, was made his strength, and seemed to cleave to him, as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man. As David's plunge into trouble from the height of prosperity, and then when he least expected it, teacheth us to rejoice, as though we rejoiced not, because we know not how near trouble may be; so his sudden return to a prosperous condition teacheth us to weep as though we wept not, because we know not how soon the storm may become a calm, and the formidable blast may become a favourable gale.

But what temper of mind was he in upon this happy change of the face of his affairs? What doth he say now? He tells us, ver. 12. (1.) His complaints were turned into praises. He looked upon it that therefore God girded him with gladness, to the end that he might be the *sweet psalmist of Israel*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. That his *glory might sing praise to God*, i. e. his tongue; for our tongue is our glory, and never more so, than when it is employed in praising God: Or, his soul, for that is our glory above the beasts, that must be employed in blessing the Lord, and with that we must make melody to him in singing psalms. They that are kept from being silent in the pit, must not be silent in the land of the living, but fervent and constant; and publick in praising God. (2.) These praises were likely to be everlasting. *I will give thanks unto thee for ever*.

This speaks a gracious resolution; that he would persevere to the end in praising God, and a gracious hope, that he should never want fresh matter for praise, and that he should shortly be there where this would be the everlasting work. Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him. Thus must we learn to accommodate ourselves to the various providences of God that are concerning us; to want and to abound, to sing of mercy and judgment, and to sing unto God for both.

P S A L M XXXI.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul; and some passages in it agree particularly to the fair escape he had at Keilah, 1 Sam. xxiii. 13. and then in the wilderness of Maon, when Saul marched on one side of the hill, and he on the other, and soon after in the cave in the wilderness of Engedi, but that it was penned upon any of those occasions, we are not told. It is a mixture of prayers and praises, and professions of confidence in God, all which do well together, and are helpful to one another. (1.) David professeth his cheerful confidence in God, and in that confidence prays for deliverance out of his present troubles, ver. 1—8. (2.) He complains of the very deplorable condition he was in, and in the sense of his calamities, still prays that God would graciously appear for him against his persecutors, ver. 9—18. (3.) He concludes the psalm with praise and triumph, giving glory to God, and encouraging himself and others to trust in him, ver. 19—24.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **I**N thee, O LORD, do I put my trust, let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. 2. Bow down thine ear to me, deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. 3. For thou art my rock and my fortress: therefore for thy names sake lead me, and guide me. 4. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. 5. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth. 6. I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD. 7. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; 8. And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Faith and prayer must go together. He that believes let him pray; *I believe, therefore have I spoken*: And he that prays, let him believe, for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here,

1. David in distress, is very earnest with God in prayer, for succour and relief. This easeth a burthened spirit, fetcheth in promised mercies, and wonderfully supports and comforts the soul in the expectation of them. He prays (1.) That God would deliver him, ver. 1. that his life might be preserved from the malice of his enemies, and that an end might be put to their persecutions of him. That God, not only in mercy but in righteousness, would deliver him, as a righteous judge betwixt him and his unrighteous persecutors. That he would bow down his ear to his petitions, to his appeals, and deliver him, ver. 2. It is condescension in God, to take cognizance of the case of the greatest and best of men; he humbleth himself to do it. And that he would deliver him speedily, lest if the deliverance were long deferred, his faith should fail. (2.) That if he did not presently deliver him out of his troubles, yet he would protect and shelter him in his troubles. *Be thou my strong rock*, immovable, impregnable, as a fastness framed by nature, and my house of defence, a fortress framed by art, and all to save me. Thus may we pray that God's providence would secure to us our lives and comforts, and that by his grace we may be enabled to think ourselves safe in him, *Prov. xviii. 10.* (3.) That his case having much in it of difficulty, both in respect of duty, and in respect of prudence, he might be under a divine conduct; Lord, lead me, and guide me, ver. 3. So order my steps, so order my spirit, that I may never do any thing unlawful and unjustifiable against my conscience; or unwise and indiscreet, against my interest. They that resolve to follow God's direction, may in faith pray for it. (4.) That his enemies being very crafty, as well as very spiteful, God would frustrate and baffle their designs against him, ver. 4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me*, and keep me from the sin, the trouble, the death, they aim to entrap me in.

2. In this prayer he gives glory to God, by a repeated profession of his confidence in him, and dependence on him. This encouraged his prayers, and qualified him for the mercies

he prayed for, ver. 1. *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust*, and not in myself, or any sufficiency of my own, or in any creature; *let me never be ashamed*, i. e. let me not be disappointed of any of that good, which thou hast promised me, and which therefore I have promised myself in thee.

1. He had chosen God for his protector, and God had by his promise undertaken to be so, ver. 3. *Thou art my rock and my fortress*, by thy covenant with me, and my believing consent to that covenant; therefore *be my strong rock*, ver. 2. They that have in sincerity avouched the Lord for theirs, may expect the benefit of his being so, for God's relations to us carry with them both name and thing. *Thou art my strength*, ver. 4. If God be our strength, we may hope that he will both put his strength in us, and put forth his strength for us.

2. He gave up his soul in a special manner to him, ver. 5. *Into thine hands I commit my spirit.* (1.) If David here look upon himself as a dying man, by these words he resigns his departing soul to God, who gave it, and to whom at death the spirit returns. Men can but kill the body, but I trust in God to redeem my soul from the power of the grave, *Psal. xlix. 15.* He is willing to die if God will have it so; but let my soul fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. With these words our Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost upon the cross, and made his soul an offering, a free-will offering, for sin, voluntarily laying down his life a ransom. By Stephen's example we are taught in our dying moments to eye Christ at God's right hand, and to commit our spirits to him, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* But (2.) David is here to be looked upon as a man in distress and trouble. And (1.) His great care is about his soul, his spirit, his better part. Note, Our outward afflictions should increase our concern for our souls. Many think while they are perplexed about their worldly affairs, and providence multiplies their cares about them, they may be excused if they neglect their souls, whereas the greater hazard our lives and secular interests lie at, the more we are concerned to look to our souls, that though the outward man perish, the inward man may suffer no damage, *2 Cor. iv. 16.* and that we may keep possession of our souls, when we can keep possession of nothing else, *Luke xxi. 19.* (2.) He thinks the best he can do for his soul, is to commit it into the hand of God, and lodge that great trust with him. He had prayed, ver. 4. to be plucked out of the net of outward trouble, but as not insisting upon that, God's will be done, he presently lets fall that petition, and commits the spirit the inward man, into God's hand, Lord, however it goes with me, as to my body, let it go well with my soul. Note, It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us solemnly to commit our spirits into the hands of God, to be sanctified by his grace, devoted to his honour, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom. That which encourageth us to commit our spirits into the hand of God, is, that he hath not only created, but redeemed them; the particular redemptions of the Old Testament church, and the Old Testament saints, were typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, *Gen. xlviii. 16.* The redemption of the soul is so precious, that it must have ceased for ever, if Christ had not undertaken it, but by redeeming our souls, he has not only acquired an additional right and title to them, which obligeth us to commit them to him as his own, but hath shewed the extraordinary kindness and concern he hath for them, which encourageth us to commit them to him to be preserved to his heavenly kingdom, *2 Tim. i. 12.* *Thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth*; redeemed it according to a promise which thou wilt be true to.

3. He disclaimed all confederacy with those that made an arm of flesh their confidence, ver. 6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities*; idolaters (so some) who expect aid from false gods, which are vanity and a lie. Astrologers, and those that give heed to them, (so others) David abhorred the use of enchantments and divinations, consulted not, nor ever took notice of the flight of birds, or entrails of beasts, good omens or bad omens, they are lying vanities, and he not only did not regard them himself, but hated the wickedness of those that did, he trusted in God only, and not in any creature; his interest in the court or country, his retreats or strong holds, even Goliath's sword itself, these were lying vanities, which he could not depend upon, but trusted in the Lord only. See *Psal. xl. 4.* *Jer. xvii. 5.*

4. He comforted himself with his hope in God, and made himself not only easy, but cheerful with it, ver. 7. Having relied on God's mercy, he will be glad and rejoice in it; and those know not how to value their hope in God, who cannot find joy enough in that hope to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs.

5. He encouraged himself in this hope, with the experiences he had had of late, and formerly of God's goodness to him, which he mentions to the glory of God; he that has delivered, doth and will. (1.) God had taken notice of his afflictions, and all the circumstances of them. *Thou hast considered my trouble*, with wisdom to suit relief to it, with condescension and compassion regarding the low estate of thy servant. (2.) He had observed the temper of his spirit, and the workings of his heart under his afflictions; *Thou hast known my soul in adversities*, with a tender concern and care for it. God's eye is upon our souls when we are in trouble, to see whether they be humbled for sin, sub-

missive

missive to the will of God, and bettered by the affliction. If the soul, when cast down under affliction, has been lifted up to him in true devotion, he knows it. (3.) He had rescued him out of the hands of Saul, when he had him safe enough in Keilah, 1 Sam. xxiii. 7. *Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy*, but set me at liberty, in a large room, where I may shift for my own safety, ver. 8. Christ's using these words, ver. 5. upon the cross, may warrant us to apply all this to Christ, who trusted in his Father, and was supported and delivered by him, and (because he humbled himself) highly exalted, which it is proper to think of when we sing these verses, as also therein to acknowledge the experience we have had of God's gracious presence with us in our troubles, and to encourage ourselves to trust in him for the future.

9. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. 10. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. 11. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without, fled from me. 12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. 13. For I have heard the slander of many, fear was on every side, while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. 14. But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. 15. My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. 16. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies sake. 17. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. 18. Let the lying lips be put to silence: which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

In the foregoing verses David had appealed to God's righteousness, and pleaded his relation to him, and dependence on him; here he appeals to his mercy, and pleads the greatness of his misery, which made his case the proper object of that mercy. Observe,

1. The complaint he makes of his trouble and distress, ver. 9. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble*, and need thy mercy: the remembrance he makes of his condition is not much unlike some, even of Job's complaints.

1. His troubles had fixed a very deep impression upon his mind, and made him a man of sorrows. So great was his grief, that his very soul was consumed with it, and his life spent with it, and he was continually sighing, ver. 9, 10. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was intimately acquainted with grief, and often in tears. We may guess by David's complexion, which was ruddy and sanguine, by his genius for musick, and by his daring enterprises in his early days, that his natural temper was both cheerful and stout, that he was apt enough to be merry, and not at all to lay trouble to his heart, and yet here we see what he is brought to: He has almost wept out his eyes, and sighed away his breath. Let those that are airy and gay, take heed of running into extremes, and never set sorrow at defiance, God can find out ways to make them melancholy, if they will not otherwise learn to be serious.

2. His body was affected with the sorrows of his mind, ver. 10. *My strength fails, my bones are consumed*, and all because of mine iniquity. As to Saul, and the quarrel he had with him, he could confidently insist upon his righteousness; but as it was an affliction God laid upon him, he owns he had deserved it, and freely confesseth his iniquity to have been the procuring cause of all his trouble; and the sense of sin touched him to the quick, and wasted him more than all his calamities.

3. His friends were unkind, and became shy of him, he was a fear to his acquaintance, when they saw him they fled from him, ver. 11. They durst not harbour him, nor give him any assistance, not shew him any countenance; not so much as be seen in his company, for fear of being brought into trouble by it; now Saul had proclaimed him a traitor, and out-lawed him. They saw how dear Ahimelech the priest had paid for aiding and abetting him, tho' ignorantly; and therefore, tho' they could not but own he had a great deal of wrong done him, yet they had not the courage to appear for him. He was forgotten by them, as a dead man out of mind, ver. 12. and looked upon with contempt as a broken vessel. They that shewed him all possible respects, when he was in honour at court, now he was fallen into disgrace, tho' unjustly, were strange to him. Such swallow-friends the world is full of, that are gone in winter. Let those that fall on the losing side, not think it strange if they be thus deserted, but

make sure a friend in heaven that will not fail them, and make use of him.

4. His enemies were unjust in their censures of him; they would not have persecuted him as they did, if they had not first represented him as an ill man, he was a reproach among all his enemies, but especially among his neighbours, ver. 11. Those that had been the witnesses of his integrity, and could not but be convinced in their consciences, that he was an honest man, yet were the most forward to represent him quite otherwise, that they might curry favour with Saul. Thus he heard the slander of many, every one had a stone to throw at him, because fear was on every side, i. e. they durst not do otherwise, for he that would not join with his neighbours to abuse David, was looked upon as disaffected to Saul. Thus the best of men have been put under the worst characters by those that resolved to give them the worst treatment.

5. His life was aimed at, and he went in continual peril of it. That fear was on every side, and he knew that whatever counsel his enemies took against him, the design was not to take away his liberty, but to take away his life, ver. 13. A life so valuable, so useful, to the good services of which all Israel owed so much, and which was never forfeited: Thus in all the plots of the Pharisees and Herodians against Christ, still the design was to take away his life, such is the enmity and cruelty of the serpent's seed.

2. His confidence in God in the midst of these troubles, every thing looked black and dismal round about him, and threatned to drive him to despair, *But I trusted in thee, O Lord*, ver. 14. and that kept me from sinking. His enemies robbed him of his reputation among men, but they could not rob him of his comfort in God, because they could not drive him from his confidence in God. Two things he comforted himself with in his straits, and he went to God, and pleaded them with him. (1.) *Thou art my God*, i. e. I have chosen thee for mine, and thou hast promised to be mine; and if he be ours, and we can by faith call him so, it is enough, when we can call nothing else ours. Thou art my God, and therefore to whom shall I go for relief but to thee? They need not be straitned in their prayers who can plead this, for if God undertake to be our God, he will do that for us which will answer the compass and vast extent of that engagement. (2.) *My times are in thy hand*. Join this with the former, and it makes the comfort compleat. If God have our times in his hand, he can help us, and if he be our God he will help us, and then what can discourage us? It is a great support to those who have God for their God, that their times are in his hand, and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best, to all those who commit their spirits also into his hand, to suit them to their times, as David here, ver. 5. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, imberber or sweeten, as he pleaseth, according to the counsel of his will. Our times, i. e. all events that are concerning us, and the timing of them, these are at God's dispose; they are not in our own hands; for the way of man is not in himself, not in our friends hands, nor in our enemies hands, but in God's, *every man's judgment proceedeth from him*. David doth not in his prayers prescribe to God, but subscribe to him, Lord, my times are in thy hand, and I am well pleased that they are so, they could not be in a better hand; thy will be done.

3. His petitions to God: In this faith and confidence,

1. He prays that God would deliver him out of the hand of his enemies, ver. 15. and save him, ver. 16. and this for his mercies sake, and not for any merit of his own. Our opportunities are in God's hand, (so some read it) and therefore he knows how to chuse the best and fittest time for our deliverance, and we must be willing to wait that time. When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, *This is the time* in which God will deliver thee, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. No, saith David, the time is not come for my deliverance, till it can be wrought without sin, and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time.

2. That God would give him the comfort of his favour in the mean time, ver. 16. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*. Let me have the comfortable tokens and evidences of thy favour to me, and that shall put gladness in my heart, in the midst of all my griefs.

3. That his prayers to God might be answered, and his hopes in God accomplished, ver. 17. *Let me not be ashamed of my hopes and prayers*, for I have called upon thee, who never saidst to thy people, seek in vain, and hope in vain.

4. That shame and silence might be the portion of wicked people, and particularly of his enemies. They were confident of their success against David, and that they should run him down, and ruin him. Lord, saith he, let them be made ashamed of that confidence, by the disappointments of their expectations. As those that opposed the building of the wall about Jerusalem, when it was finished, were much cast down in their own eyes, Neh. vi. 16. *Let them be silent in the grave*. Note, Death will silence the rage and clamour of cruel persecutors, whom reason would not silence. In the grave the wicked cease from troubling. Particularly, he prays for, that is, he prophesies the silencing of those that reproach and calumniate the people of God, ver. 18.

Let lying lips be put to silence, that speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. This is a very good prayer, (1.) Which we have often occasion to put up to God; for they that set their mouth against the heavens, commonly fall foul on the heirs of heaven. Religion, and the strict and serious professors of it, are every where spoken against, 1. With a great deal of malice; they speak grievous things, on purpose to vex them, and hoping with what they say to do them a real mischief. They speak hard things, (so the word is) which bear hard upon them, and by which they hope to fasten indelible characters of infamy upon them. 2. With a great deal of falshood, they are lying lips, taught by the father of lies, and serving his interest. 3. With a great deal of scorn and disdain: They speak proudly and contemptuously, as if the righteous, whom God has honoured, were the most despicable people in the world, and not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock. One would think they thought it no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it may but serve to expose a good man either to hatred or contempt. *Hear, O our God, for we are despised.* (2.) We may pray it in faith; for these lying lips shall be put to silence. God has many ways of doing it. Sometimes he convinceth the consciences of those that reproach his people, and turns their hearts; sometimes by his providence he visibly confutes their calumnies, and brings forth the righteousness of his people as the light. However, there is a day coming, when God will convince ungodly sinners of the falshood of all the hard speeches they have spoken against his people, and will execute judgment upon them, *Judg. xiv. 15.* Then shall this prayer be fully answered, and to that day we should have an eye in the singeing of it; engaging ourselves likewise by well-doing, if possible, to *silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. ii. 15.*

19. O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men! 20. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. 21. Blessed be the LORD; for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. 22. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto thee. 23. O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. 24. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

We have three things in these verses:

1. The believing acknowledgment which David makes of God's goodness to his people in general, *ver. 19, 20.*

(1.) God is good to all, but he is in a special manner good to Israel. His goodness to them is wonderful, and will be to eternity matter of admiration. *O how great is thy goodness!* how profound are the counsels of it; how rich are the treasures of it; how free and extensive are the communications of it! Those very persons whom men load with slanders, God loads with benefits and honours. Those who are interested in this goodness, are described to be such as fear God, and trust in him, that stand in awe of his greatness, and rely on his grace. This goodness is said to be laid up for them, and wrought for them. 1. There is goodness laid up for them in the other world, an inheritance *reserved in heaven, 1 Pet. i. 4.* and there is a goodness wrought for them in this world, goodness wrought in them. There is enough in God's goodness both for the portion and inheritance of all his children, when they come to their full age; and for their maintenance and education during their minority. There is enough in bank, and enough in hand. 2. This goodness is laid up in his promise for all that fear God, to whom assurance is given that they shall want no good thing: But it is wrought in the actual performance of the promise, for those that trust in him, *i. e.* that by faith take hold of the promise, put it in suit, and draw out to themselves the benefit and comfort of it. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of the everlasting covenant be not wrought for us, it is our own fault; because we do not believe. But those that trust in God, as they have the comfort of his goodness in their own bosoms; so they have the credit of it (and the credit of an estate goes far with some) it is wrought for them before the sons of men; God's goodness to them puts an honour upon them, and rolls away their reproach; *for all that see them, shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed, Isa. lxi. 9.*

(2.) God preserveth man and beast; but he is in a special manner the protector of his own people, *ver. 20. Thou shalt hide them.* As his goodness is hid and reserved for them, so they are hid and preserved for it. The saints are God's hidden ones. See here, 1. The danger they are in, which ariseth from the pride of man, and from the strife of tongues; proud men insult

over them, and would trample on them, and tread them down; contentious men pick quarrels with them, and when tongues are at strife, good people oftentimes go by the worst. The pride of men endangers their liberty; the strife of tongues in perverse disputings endangers truth. But, 2. See the defence they are under: *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence; in a pavilion.* God's providence shall keep them safe from the malice of their enemies: He has many ways of sheltering them; when Baruch and Jeremiah were sought for, *the Lord hid them, Jer. xxxvi. 26.* God's grace shall keep them safe from the evil of the judgments that are abroad; to them they have no sting; they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, for there is no anger at them. His comforts shall keep them easy and cheerful, and his sanctuary, where they have communion with him, shelters them from the fiery darts of terror and temptation. And the mansions in his house above, shall be shortly, shall be eternally, their hiding place from all danger and fear.

2. The thankful returns which David makes for God's goodness to him in particular, *ver. 21, 22.* Having admired God's goodness to all the saints, he here owns how good he had found him.

(1.) Without were fightings; but God had wonderfully preserved his life. He *hath shewed me his marvellous loving kindness, i. e.* He hath given me an instance of his care of me, and favour to me, beyond what I could have expected. God's loving kindness to his people, all things considered, is wonderful; but some instances of it, even in this world, are in a special manner marvellous in their eyes; as this here, when God preserved David from the sword of Saul in caves and woods, as safe as if he had been in a strong city. In Keilah, that strong city, God shewed him great mercy, both in making him an instrument to rescue the inhabitants out of the hands of the Philistines, and then in rescuing him from the same men, who would have ungratefully delivered him up into the hand of Saul, *1 Sam. xxiii. 5, 12.* This was marvellous loving kindness indeed, upon which he writes with wonder and thankfulness, *blessed be the Lord.* Special preservations call for particular thanksgivings.

(2.) Within were fears: but God was better to him than his fears, *ver. 22.* He here keeps an account (1.) Of his own folly in distrusting God, which he acknowledgeth to his shame, that tho' he had express promises to build upon, and great experience of God's care concerning him in many straits; yet he had entertained this hard and jealous thought of God, and could not forbear telling it him to his face, *I am cut off from before thine eyes, i. e.* Thou hast quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul,* and so be cut off before thine eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on, *1 Sam. xxvii. 1.* This he said in his flight, (so some read it) which notes the distress of his affairs; Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong; *In his haste,* (so we read it) which notes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprizing, so that it found him off his guard. Note, It is a common thing to speak amiss, when we speak in haste, and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste, we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God. (2.) Of God's wonderful goodness to him notwithstanding; tho' his faith failed, God's promise did not, *Thou heardst the voice of my supplication* for all this. He mentions his own unbelief as a foil to God's fidelity, serving to make his loving kindness the more marvellous, the more illustrious. When we have thus distrusted God, he might justly have taken us at our word, and brought our fears upon us, as he did on Israel, *Num. xiv. 28. Isa. lxvi. 4.* But he has pitied and pardoned us, and our unbelief has not made his promise and grace of none effect; for he knows our frame.

3. The exhortation and encouragement which he hereupon gives to all the saints, *ver. 23, 24.*

1. He would have them set their love on God, *ver. 23. O love the Lord, all ye his saints.* Those that have their own hearts full of love to God, cannot but desire that others also may be in love with him; for in his favour there is no need to fear a rival. It is the character of the saints, that they do love God; and yet they must be still called upon to love him, to love him more, and love him better, and give proofs of their love. We must love him not only for his goodness, because he preserveth the faithful, but for his justice, because he plentifully rewardeth the proud doer (who would ruin those whom he preserves) according to their pride. Some take it in a good sense, he plentifully rewardeth the magnificent (or excellent) doer, that is daringly good, whose heart, like Jehoshaphat, is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He rewardeth him that doth well, but plentifully rewardeth him that doth excellently well.

2. He would have them set their hope in God, *ver. 24.* Be of good courage, have a good heart on it, whatever difficulties or dangers you may meet with, the God you trust in shall by that trust strengthen your heart. They that hope in God have reason to be of good courage, and let their hearts be strong, for as nothing truly evil can befall them, so nothing truly good for them, shall be wanting to them.

In singing this, we should animate ourselves, and one another, to proceed and persevere in our christian course, whatever threatens us, and whoever frowns upon us.

P S A L M XXXII.

This psalm, tho' it speak not of Christ, as many of the psalms hitherto we have met with have done, yet it has a great deal of gospel in it. The apostle tells us, that David in this psalm describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Rom. iv. 6. We have here a summary, (1.) Of gospel grace in the pardon of sin, ver. 1, 2. In divine protection, ver. 7. and divine conduct, ver. 8. (2.) Of gospel duty; To confess sin, ver. 3—5. To pray, ver. 6. To govern ourselves well, ver. 9, 10. And to rejoice in God, ver. 11. And the way to obtain these privileges, is to make conscience of these duties, which we ought to think of; of the former for our comfort, of the latter for our quickning, when we sing this psalm. Grotius thinks it was designed to be sung on the day of atonement.

¶ A psalm of David, Maschil.

BLESSED is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. 3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roing all the day long. 4. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. 5. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. 6. For this shall every one that is godly, pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayst be found: surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him.

This psalm is entitled, Maschil, which some take to be only the name of the tune to which it was set, and was to be sung. But others think it is significant; our margin reads it, *A psalm of David giving instruction*; and there is nothing in which we have more need of instruction, than in the nature of true blessedness, wherein it consists, and the way that leads to it, what we must do that we may be happy. There are divers things in which these verses instruct us. In general we are here taught, that our happiness consists in the favour and grace of God, and not in the wealth of this world; in spiritual blessings, and not the good things of this world; when David saith, *Psal. i. 1. Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, and Psal. cxix. 1. Blessed are the undefiled in the way*, the meaning is, this is the character of the blessed man, and he that has not this character cannot expect to be happy; but when it is here said, *Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven*, the meaning is, This is the ground of his blessedness, this is that fundamental privilege from which all the other ingredients of his blessedness flow.

In particular we are here instructed:

1. Concerning the nature of the pardon of sin; this is that we all need, and are undone without, and we are therefore concerned to be very solicitous and inquisitive about it. (1.) It is the forgiving of transgression. *Sin is the transgression of the law*; upon our repentance the transgression is forgiven, i. e. the obligation to punishment, which we lay under by virtue of the sentence of the law, is vacated and cancelled; it is lifted off (so some read it) that by the pardon of it we may be eased of a burden, a heavy burden, like a load on the back that make us stoop, or a load on the stomach that makes us sick, or a load on the spirits that makes us sink: The remission of sins gives rest and relief to those that were weary and heavy laden, *Matt. xi. 28.* (2.) It is the covering of sin, as nakedness is covered, that it may not appear to our shame, *Rev. iii. 18.* One of the first symptoms of guilt in our first parents, was blushing at their own nakedness; sin makes us loathsome in the sight of God, and utterly unfit for communion with him, and when conscience is awakened, it makes us loathsome to ourselves too; but when it is pardoned, it is covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, like the coats of skins wherewith God clothed Adam and Eve, (an emblem of the remission of sins) so that God is no longer displeased with us, but perfectly reconciled. They are not covered from us; no, *my sin is ever before me*, nor covered from God's omniscience, but from his vindictive justice; when he pardons sin, he remembers it no more, he casts it behind his back, it shall be sought for and not found. And the sinner being thus reconciled to God, begins to be reconciled to himself. (3.) It is the not imputing of iniquity, not laying it to the sinner's charge, not proceeding against him for it, according to the strictness of the law, not

No. xl.

dealing with him as he deserves. The righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, and we made the righteousness of God in him, our iniquity is not imputed, God having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and made him sin for us. Observe, It is God's act not to impute iniquity, for he is the judge. *It is God that justifieth.*

2. Concerning the character of those whose sins are pardoned, in whose spirit there is no guile, he doth not say there is no guilt, for who is there that lives and sins not? but no guile; that doth not dissemble with God in his professions of repentance and faith, and in his prayers for peace or pardon; but in all these is sincere, and means as he saith, that doth not repent with a purpose to sin again, and then sin with a purpose to repent again, as a learned interpreter glosseth upon it. Those that design honestly, that are really what they profess to be, those are the Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

3. Concerning the happiness of a justified state; blessednesses are to the man, whose iniquity is forgiven, all manner of blessings sufficient to make him compleatly blessed. That is taken away which incurred the curse, and obstructed the blessing, and then God will pour out blessings till there be no room to receive them. The forgiveness of sin is that article of the covenant, which is the reason and ground of all the rest, *for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, *Heb. viii. 12.*

4. Concerning the uncomfortable condition of an unhumbled sinner, that sees his guilt, but is not yet brought to make a penitent confession of it. This David describes very pathetically from his own sad experience, *ver. 3, 4. While I kept silence, my bones waxed old.* Those may be said to keep silence that stifle their convictions, that when they cannot but see the evil of sin, and their danger by reason of it, ease themselves by not thinking of it, and diverting their minds to something else; as Cain to the building of a city; that cry not when God binds them; that will not unburthen their consciences by a penitent confession, nor seek for peace, as they ought, by faithful and fervent prayer; and that chuse rather to pine away in their iniquities, than to take the method which God has appointed of finding rest for their souls; let such expect that their smothered convictions will be a fire in their bones, and the wounds of sin not opened will fester and grow intolerably painful. If conscience be feared, the case is so much the more dangerous; but if it be startled and awake, it will be heard: The hand of divine wrath will be felt lying heavy upon the soul, and the anguish of the spirit will affect the body; to that degree David experienced it, so that when he was young his bones waxed old; and even his silence made him roar all the day long, as if he had been under some grievous pain and distemper of body; when really the cause of all his uneasiness was the struggle he felt in his own bosom between his convictions and his corruptions.

Note, *He that covers his sin shall not prosper*, some inward trouble is required in repentance, but there is much worse in impenitency.

5. Concerning the true and only way to peace of conscience: We are here taught to confess, our sins that they may be forgiven, to declare them, that we may be justified. This course David took, *I acknowledged my sin unto thee*, and no longer hid mine iniquity, *ver. 5.* Note, Those that would have the comfort of the pardon of their sins, must take shame to themselves by a penitent confession of them. We must confess the fact of sin, and be particular in it, *Thus, and thus have I done*; confess the fault of sin, aggravate it, and lay load upon ourselves for it, *I have done very wickedly*; confess the justice of the punishment we have been under for it, *The Lord is just in all that is brought upon us*; and that we deserve much worse, *I am no more worthy to be called thy son.* We must confess sin with shame and holy blushing, with fear and holy trembling.

6. Concerning God's readiness to pardon sin to those who truly repent of it. *I said, I will confess*, i. e. I sincerely resolved upon it, hesitated no longer, but came to a point, that I would make a free and ingenuous confession of my sins, and immediately *thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*, and gavest me the comfort of the pardon in mine own conscience; presently I found rest to my soul. Note, God is more ready to pardon sin upon our repentance, than we are to repent in order to the obtaining of pardon. It was with much ado that David was here brought to confess his sins, he was put to the rack before he was brought to it, *ver. 3, 4.* he held out long, and would not surrender till it came to the last extremity; but when he did offer to surrender, see how quickly, how easily he obtained good terms; I did but say I will confess, and thou forgavest. Thus the father of the prodigal saw his returning son *when he was yet afar off*, and ran to meet him with the kiss that sealed his pardon. What an encouragement is this to poor penitents? and what an assurance doth it give us, that *if we confess our sins*, we shall find God not only faithful and just, but gracious and kind to forgive us our sins?

7. Concerning the good use that we are to make of the experience David had of God's readiness to forgive his sins, *ver. 6. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee.* Note, (1.) All godly people are praying people. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *Behold he prays*, *Acts ix. 11.* You may as

soon

soon find a living man without breath, as a living christian without prayer. (2.) The instructions given us concerning the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and the easiness of obtaining the pardon, should engage and encourage us to pray, and particularly to pray, *God be merciful to us sinners*: For this shall every one that is well inclined be earnest with God in prayer, and *come boldly to the throne of grace*, with hopes to *obtain mercy*, Heb. iv. 16. (3.) Those that would speed in prayer, must seek the Lord in *a time when he will be found*: When he doth by his providence call them to seek him, and by his Spirit stir them up to seek him, they must *go speedily to seek the Lord*, Zech. viii. 21. and lose no time lest death cut them off, and then it will be too late to seek him, *Isa. lv. 6. Behold now is the accepted time*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. (4.) Those that are sincere and abundant in prayer, will find the benefit of it when they are in trouble. *Surely in the floods of great waters*, which are very threatening, *they shall not come nigh them* to terrify them, or create them any uneasiness, much less shall they overwhelm them. Those that have God *nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for*, as all upright, penitent, praying people have, are so guarded, so advanced, that no waters, no not great waters, no not floods of them, can come nigh them to hurt them. As the temptations of the *wicked one touch them not*, 1 John v. 18. so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts of both kinds drop short of them.

7. Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. 8. I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. 9. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. 10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. 11. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice ye righteous: and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

David is here improving the experience he had had of the comfort of pardoning mercy.

(1.) He speaks to God, and professeth his confidence in him, and expectation from him, *ver. 7.* having tasted the sweetness of divine grace to a penitent sinner, he cannot doubt of the continuance of that grace to a praying saint; and that in that grace he should find both safety and joy. (1.) Safety; *Thou art my hiding place*, when by faith I have recourse to thee, I see all the reason in the world to be easy, and to think my self out of the reach of any real evil. *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble*, from the sting of it, and from the strokes of it, as far as is good for me. *Thou shalt preserve me from such trouble as I was in while I kept silence*, *ver. 3.* when God has pardoned our sins, if he leave us to ourselves, we shall soon run as far in debt again as ever, and plunge ourselves again into the same gulf; and therefore when we have received the comfort of our remission, we must fly to the grace of God to be preserved from returning to folly again, and having our hearts again hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; God keeps his people from trouble, by keeping them from sin. (2.) Joy; thou shalt not only deliver me, but *compass me about with songs of deliverance*, which way soever I look I shall see occasion to rejoice and to praise God, and my friends also shall compass me about in the great congregation, to join with me in songs of praise: They shall join their songs of deliverance with mine; as *every one that is godly shall pray with me*, so they shall give thanks with me.

(2.) He turns his speech to the children of men; being himself converted, he doth what he can to *strengthen his brethren*, Luke xxii. 32. *ver. 8.* I will instruct thee whoever thou art that desirest instruction, and *teach thee in the way which thou shalt go*. Thus in another of his penitential psalms, he resolves that when God had restored to him the joy of his salvation, he would teach transgressors his works, and do what he could to convert sinners to God, as well as to comfort those that were converted, *Pfal. li. 12, 13.* when Solomon became a penitent, he presently became a preacher, *Ecclef. i. 1.* Those are best able to teach others the grace of God who have themselves had the experience of it: And those who are themselves taught of God ought to *tell others what he had done for their souls*, *Pfal. lxvi. 16.* and so teach them. *I will guide thee with mine eye*. Some apply it to God's conduct, and direction: He teacheth us by his word, and guides us with his eye, *i. e.* by the secret intimations of his will in the hints and turns of providence, which he enables his people to understand and take direction from; as a master makes a servant know his mind by a wink of his eye: When Christ turned and looked upon Peter, he guided him with his eye. But it is rather to be taken as David's promise to those who sat under his instruction, his own children and family especially. *I will counsel thee, mine eye shall be upon thee*, (so the margin reads it:) I will give thee the best counsel I can,

and then observe whether thou takest it or no. Those that are taught in the word, should be under the constant inspection of those that teach them; spiritual guides must be overseers.

In this application of the foregoing doctrine concerning the blessedness of those whose sins are pardoned, here is a word to sinners, and a word to faints; and this is rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each their portion.

(1.) Here is a word of caution to sinners, and a good reason given for it. (1.) The caution is not to be unruly and ungovernable, *ver. 9.* *Be ye not as the horse, or the mule which have no understanding*. When the psalmist would reproach himself for the sins he repenteth of, he compared himself to a *beast before God, so foolish have I been and ignorant*, *Pfal. lxxiii. 23.* and therefore warns others not to be so. It is our honour and happiness that we have understanding, that we are capable of being governed by reason, and of reasoning with ourselves: Let us therefore use the faculties we have, and act rationally. The horse and mule must be managed with bit and bridle, lest they come near us to do us a mischief, or (as some read it) that they may come near us, to do us service, that they *may obey us*, *Jam. iii. 3.* Let us not be like them, *i. e.* let us not be hurried by appetite and passion at any time, to go contrary to the dictates of right reason, and to our true interest: If sinners would be governed and determined by these, they would soon become faints, and would not go a step further in their sinful courses; where there is renewing grace, there is no need of the bit and bridle of restraining grace. (2.) The reason for this caution is, because the way of sin which we would persuade you to forsake, will certainly end in sorrow, *ver. 10.* *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked*, which will not only spoil their vain and carnal mirth, and put an end to it, but will make them pay dear for it. Sin will have sorrow, if not repented of, everlasting sorrow. It was part of the sentence, *I will greatly multiply thy sorrows*. Be wise for yourselves therefore, and turn from your wickedness, that you may prevent those sorrows, those many sorrows.

(2.) Here is a word of comfort to faints, and a good reason given for that too. (1.) They are assured that if they will but trust in the Lord, and keep close to him, *mercy shall compass them about on every side*, *ver. 10.* so that they shall not depart from God, for that mercy shall keep them in, nor shall any real evil break in upon them, for that mercy shall keep it out. (2.) They are therefore commanded to be glad in the Lord, and to rejoice in him, to that degree, as even to *shout for joy*, *ver. 11.* Let them be so transported with this holy joy, as not to be able to contain themselves, and let them affect others with it, that they also may see that a life of communion with God, is the most pleasant and comfortable life we can live in this world. This is that present bliss which the upright in heart, and they only are entitled to, and qualified for.

P S A L M XXXIII.

This is a psalm of praise, it is probable David was the penman of it, but we are not told so, because God would have us look above the penmen of sacred writ, to that blessed Spirit that moved and guided them. The psalmist in this psalm, (1.) Calls upon the righteous to praise God, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) Furnisheth us with matter for praise. We must praise God, (1.) For his justice, goodness, and truth, appearing in his word, and in all his works, *ver. 4, 5.* (2.) For his power appearing in the work of creation, *ver. 6—9.* (3.) For the sovereignty of his providence in the government of the world, *ver. 10, 11.* and again, *ver. 13—17.* (4.) For the peculiar favour which he bears to his own chosen people, which encourageth them to trust in him, *ver. 13.* and again, *ver. 18—22.* We need not be far to seek for proper thoughts in singing this psalm, which so naturally speaks the pious affections of a devout soul towards God.

1. REJOYCE in the LORD, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright. 2. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings. 3. Sing unto him a new song, play skilfully with a loud noise. 4. For the word of the LORD is right: and all his works are done in truth. 5. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. 6. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made: and all the host of them, by the breath of his mouth. 7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together, as an heap: he layeth up the depth in store houses. 8. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast. 10. The LORD

LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. 11. The counsel of the **LORD** standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Four things the psalmist expresseth in these verses.

(1.) The great desire he had that God might be praised: he did not think he did it so well himself, but that he wished others also might be employed in this work, the more the better in this comfort, it is the liker to heaven. (1.) Holy joy is the heart and soul of praise, and that is here pressed upon all good people, *ver. 1. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous*, so the foregoing psalm concluded, and so this begins; for all our religious exercises should both begin and end with a holy complacency, and triumph in God as the best of beings, and best of friends. (2.) Thankful praise is the breath and language of holy joy; and that also is here required of us, *ver. 2. Praise the Lord*. Speak well of him, and give him the glory due to his name. (3.) Religious songs are the proper expressions of thankful praise; those are here required, *ver. 3. Sing unto him a new song*, the best you have, not that which by frequent use is worn thread-bare; but that which being new is most likely to move the affections. A new song for new mercies, and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are new every morning. Musick was then used by the appointment of David, with the temple songs, that they might be the better sung; and this also is here called for, *ver. 2. Sing unto him with the psaltery*. Here is, (1.) A good rule for this duty, do it skilfully, and with a loud noise; let it have the best both of head and heart; let it be done intelligently, and with a clear head; affectionately, and with a warm heart. (2.) A good reason for this duty, for *praise is comely for the upright*. It is greatly well-pleasing to God; the garments of praise add much to the comeliness which God puts upon his people; and it is an excellent ornament to our profession; *It becomes the upright*, whom God has put so much honour upon, to give honour to him. The upright praise God in a comely manner, for they praise him with their hearts, that is praising him with their glory. Whereas the praises of hypocrites are awkward and uncomely, like *a parable in the mouth of fools*, *Prov. xxvi. 7*.

2. The high thoughts he had of God, and of his infinite perfections, *ver. 4, 5*. God makes himself known to us. (1.) In his word; here put for all divine revelation, all that which God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the children of men; and that is all right, there is nothing amiss in it: his commands exactly agree with the rules of equity, and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises all are wise and good, and inviolably sure, and there is no iniquity in his threatenings, but even those are designed for our good, by deterring us from evil. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong, and we are then in the right when we agree with it. (2.) In his works, and those are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the *scriptures of truth*, *Dan. x. 21*. The copy in all God's works agrees exactly with the great original, the plan laid in the eternal mind, and varies not in the least jot. God has made it to appear in his works. (1.) That he is a God of inflexible justice. *He loveth righteousness and judgment*. There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence he passeth, and judgment in the execution of it. He never did or can do wrong to any of his creatures, but is always ready to right those that are wronged, and doth it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is himself the righteous Lord, and therefore loveth righteousness. (2.) That he is a God of inexhaustible bounty; *the earth is full of his goodness*, i. e. of the proofs and instances of it. The benign influences which the earth receives from above, and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce; the provision that is made both for man and beast, and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed, plainly speak that *the earth is full of his goodness*; the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted. What pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness should be so empty of his praises; and that of the multitudes that live upon his bounty, there are so few that live to his glory?

(3.) The conviction he was under of the almighty power of God, evidenced in the creation of the world. We believe in God, and therefore we praise him as the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, so we are here taught to praise him.

Observe, (1.) How God made the world, and brought all things into being. (1.) How easily: All things were made *by the word of the Lord, and by the breath of his mouth*; Christ is the word, the Spirit is the breath, so that God the Father made the world, as he rules it, and redeems it by his Son and Spirit. He spake, and he commanded, *ver. 9*. and that was enough, there needed no more: With men, saying and doing are two things, but it is not so with God; by the Word and Spirit of God as the world was made, so was man, that little world: God said,

Let us make man, and he breathed into him the breath of life. By the Word and Spirit the church is built, that new world, and grace wrought in the soul, that new man, that new creation. What cannot that power do, which with a word made a world! (2.) How effectually it was done, and it stood fast. What God doth, he doth to purpose; he doth it and it *stands fast*, *ver. 9. Whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever*, *Ecclef. iii. 14*. It is by virtue of that command to stand fast, that they *continue to this day according to God's ordinance*. *Psal. cxix. 91*.

(2.) What he made: He made all things, but notice is here taken, (1.) *Of the heavens, and the host of them*, *ver. 6*. The visible heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars, their hosts; the highest heavens, and the angels their hosts. (2.) *Of the waters, and the treasures of them*, *ver. 7*. The earth was at first covered with the water, and being heavier, must of course subside and sink under it; but to shew from the very first, that the God of nature is not tied to the ordinary method of nature, and the usual operations of his powers; with a word's speaking, *he gathered the waters together on a heap*, that the dry land might appear, yet left them not to continue on a heap, but *laid up the depth in store-houses*; not only in the flats where the seas make their beds, and in which they are locked up by the sand on the shore as in store-houses, but in secret subterraneous caverns, where they are hid from the eyes of all living, but were reserved as in a store-house for that day, when those fountains of the great deep were to be broken up; and they are still laid up there in store, for what use the great Master of the house knows best.

(3.) What use is to be made of this, *ver. 8. Let all the earth fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him*, i. e. let all the children of men worship him, and give glory to him, *Psal. xcv. 5, 6*. The everlasting gospel gives this as the reason why we must worship God, because he made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, *Rev. xiv. 6, 7*. Let us all fear him, i. e. dread his wrath and displeasure, and be afraid of having him our enemy, and standing it out against him. Let us not dare to offend him, who having this power, no doubt, has all power in his hand. It is dangerous being at war with him, who has the host of heaven for his armies, and the depths of the sea for his magazines, and therefore it is wisdom to desire conditions of peace, see *Jer. v. 22*.

4. The satisfaction he had in God's sovereignty and dominion, *ver. 10, 11*. He over-rules all the counsels of men, and makes them contrary to their intention serviceable to his counsels. Come and see with an eye of faith God in the throne; (1.) Frustrating the devices of his enemies. *He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought*, so that what they imagine against him and his kingdom proves *a vain thing*, *Psal. ii. 1*. the counsel of Ahithophel is turned into foolishness, Haman's plot baffled; tho' the design be laid never so deep, and the hopes raised upon it never so high, yet if God saith *it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass*; it is all to no purpose. (2.) Fulfilling his own decrees: *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever*. It is immutable in itself, *for he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* The execution of it may be opposed, but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most surprizing the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled, nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its times. With what pleasure to ourselves may we in singing this give praise to God? How easy may this thought make us at all times, that God governs the world, that he did it in infinite wisdom before we were born, and will do it when we are silent in the dust?

12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the **LORD**: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. 13. The **LORD** looketh from heaven: he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. 16. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. 18. Behold, the eye of the **LORD** is upon them that fear him: upon them that hope in his mercy: 19. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20. Our soul waiteth for the **LORD**: he is our help and our shield. 21. For our hearts shall rejoice in him; because we have trusted in his holy name. 22. Let thy mercy, O **LORD**, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

We are here taught to give to God the glory;

(1.) Of his common providence towards all the children of men. Tho' he has endued man with understanding and freedom of will, yet he reserves to himself the government of him, and

and even of those very faculties by which he is qualified to govern himself.

(1.) The children of men are all under his eye, even their hearts are so, and all the motions and operations of their souls, which none know but they themselves, he knows better than they themselves, *ver.* 13, 14. Tho' the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet from thence he not only has a prospect of all the earth, but a particular inspection of all the inhabitants of the earth. He not only beholdeth them; but he looks upon them, he looks narrowly upon them, so the word here used is sometimes rendered; so narrowly, that not the least thought can escape his observation. Atheists think, that because he dwells above in heaven, he cannot, or will not, take notice of what is done here in this lower world, but from thence, as high as it is, he sees us all, and all persons and things are naked and open before him.

(2.) Their hearts as well as their times are all in his hand. *He fashioneth their hearts.* He made them at first, formed the spirit of each man within him, then when he brought him into being. Hence he is called the Father of spirits: And this is a good argument to prove that he perfectly knows them; the artist that made the clock, can account for the motions of every wheel. David useth this argument, with application to himself, *Pfal.* cxxxix. 1. 14. He still molds the hearts of men, turns them as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleaseth, to serve his own purposes, darkens or enlightens mens understandings, stiffens or bows their wills according as he is pleased to make use of them. He that fashions mens hearts, fashions them alike; it is in hearts as in faces, tho' there is a great difference, and such a variety, as that no two faces are exactly of the same features, nor any two hearts exactly of the same temper, yet there is such a similitude, as that in some things all faces and all hearts agree, *as in water face answers to face*, *Prov.* xxvii. 19. He fashions them together, (so some read it) as the wheels of a watch, tho' of different shapes, sizes, and motions, yet are all put together to serve one and the same purpose, so the hearts of men and their dispositions, however varying from each other, and seeming to contradict one another, yet are all over-ruled to serve the divine purpose, which is one.

(3.) They, and all they do, are obnoxious to his judgment, for he considereth all their works, not only knows them, but weighs them, that he may render to every man according to his works, in the day, in the world of retribution, in the judgment, and to eternity.

(4.) All the powers of the creature have a dependence upon him, and are of no account, of no avail at all without him, *ver.* 16, 17. It is much for the honour of God, that not only no force can prevail in opposition to him; but that no force can act but in dependence on him, and by a power derived from him.

1. The strength of a king is nothing without God; no king is sacred by his royal prerogatives, or the authority with which he is invested, for the powers of that kind that be, are ordained of God, and are what he makes them, and no more. David was a king, and a man of war from his youth, and yet acknowledged God only to be his protector and saviour.

2. The strength of an army is nothing without God. The multitude of an host cannot secure those under whose command they act, unless God make them a security to them. A great army cannot be sure of victory, for when God pleaseth, one shall chase a thousand.

3. The strength of a giant is nothing without God; a mighty man, such as Goliath was, is not delivered by his much strength, when his day comes to fall, neither the firmness nor activity of his body, neither the stoutness nor resolution of his mind, will stand him in any stead, any further than God is pleased to give him success. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, but let us all strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God, go forth, and go on in his strength.

4. The strength of a horse is nothing without God, *ver.* 17. *A horse is a vain thing for safety.* In war horses were then so highly accounted of, and so much depended on, that God forbade the kings of Israel to multiply horses, *Deut.* xvii. 16. lest they should be tempted to trust to them, and their confidence should thereby be taken off from God. David houghed the horses of the Syrians, *2 Sam.* viii. 4. here he houghs all the horses in the world, by pronouncing a horse a vain thing for safety in the day of battle. If the war-horse be unruly, and ill-managed, he may hurry his rider into danger, instead of carrying him out of danger. If he be killed under him, he may be his death, instead of saving his life. It is therefore our interest to make sure God's favour towards us, and then we may be sure of his power engaged for us, and need not fear whatever is against us.

2. We are to give God the glory of his special grace. In the midst of his acknowledgments of God's providence, he pronounceth those blessed that have Jehovah for their God, who governs the world, and has wherewithal to help them in every time of need, while they were miserable who had this and the other Baal for their God, which was so far from being able to hear and help them, that it was itself senseless and helpless, *ver.* 12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, even Israel, who*

had the knowledge of the true God, and were taken into covenant with him, and all others who own God for theirs, and are owned by him; for they also, whatever nation they are of, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. (1.) It is their wisdom that they take the Lord for their God, that they direct their homage and adoration there where it is due, and where the payment of it will not be in vain. (2.) It is their happiness, that they are the people whom God hath chosen for his own inheritance, whom he is pleased with, and honoured in, and whom he protects and takes cares of, whom he cultivates and improves as a man doth his inheritance, *Deut.* xxxii. 9. Now let us observe here to the honour of divine grace,

1. The regard which God has to his people, *ver.* 18, 19. God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favour and complacency is upon them that fear him; he looks upon them with delight, as the father on his children, as the bridegroom on his spouse, *Isa.* lxii. 5. While those that depend on arms and armies, on chariots and horses, perish in the disappointment of their expectations, God's people under his protection are safe, for he shall deliver their soul from death, when there seems to be but a step between them and it; if he do not deliver the body from temporal death, yet he will deliver the soul from spiritual and eternal death; their souls, whatever happens, shall live and praise him, either in this world, or in a better. From his bounty they shall be supplied with all necessities, he shall keep them alive in famine; when others die for want, they shall live, which makes it a distinguishing mercy: When visible means fail, God will find out some way or other to supply them. He doth not say he will give them abundance, they have no reason either to desire it, or to expect it, but he will keep them alive, they shall not starve; and when destroying judgments are abroad, it ought to be reckoned a great favour, for it is a very sensible one, and very obliging to have our lives given us for a prey. They that have the Lord for their God, shall find him their help, and their shield, *ver.* 20. In their difficulties he will assist them, they shall be helped over them, helped through them; in their dangers he will secure them, so that they shall not receive any real damage.

2. The regard which God's people have to him, and which we all ought to have in consideration of this.

1. We must wait for God; we must attend the motions of his providence, and accommodate ourselves to them, and patiently expect the issue of them. Our souls must wait for him, *ver.* 20. we must not only in word and tongue profess a believing regard to God, but it must be inward and sincere, a secret and silent attendance on him.

2. We must rely on God. Hope in his mercy, in the goodness of his nature, tho' we have not an express promise to depend upon. They that fear God and his wrath, must hope in God and his mercy; for there is no flying from God, but by flying to him. These pious dispositions will not only consist together, but befriend each other; a holy fear of God, and yet at the same time a hope in his mercy. This is *trusting in his holy name*, *ver.* 21. in all that whereby he has made known himself to us, for our encouragement to serve him.

3. We must rejoice in God, *ver.* 21. And those do not truly rest in God, or do not know the unspeakable advantage they have by so doing, who do not rejoice in him at all times, because they that hope in God, hope for an eternal fulness of joy in his presence.

4. We must seek to him for that mercy which we hope in, *ver.* 22. Our expectations from God are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage our applications to him; he will be sought unto for that which he has promised, and therefore the psalm concludes with a short, but comprehensive prayer, *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us*; let us always have the comfort and benefit of it, not according as we merit from thee, but according as we hope in thee, *i. e.* according to the promise which thou hast in thy word given to us, and according to the faith which thou hast by thy Spirit and grace wrought in us. If in singing these verses, we put forth a dependence upon God, and let out our desires towards him, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

P S A L M XXXIV.

This psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, as appears by the title, and yet there is little in it peculiar to that occasion, but that which is general, both by way of thanksgiving to God, and instruction to us. (1.) He praiseth God for the experience which he and others had had of his goodness, ver. 1—6. (2.) He encourageth all good people to trust in God, and to seek to him, ver. 7—10. (3.) He gives good counsel to us all, as unto children, to take heed of sin, and to make conscience of our duty both to God and man, ver. 11—14. (4.) To enforce this good counsel, he shews God's favour to the righteous, and his displeasure against the wicked, in which he sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, ver. 15—22. So that in singing this

this psalm, we are both to give glory to God, and to teach and admonish ourselves and one another.

A psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech: who drove him away, and he departed.

I WILL bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. 3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4. I fought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. 6. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him; and saved him out of all his troubles. 7. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8. O taste, and see, that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. 9. O fear the LORD ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. 10. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

The title of this psalm tells us both who penned it, and upon what occasion it was penned. David being forced to run his country, which was made too hot for him, by the rage of Saul, fought for shelter as near it as he could, in the land of the Philistines; there it was soon discovered who he was, and he was brought before the king, who in the story is called Achish, his proper name, here Abimelech his title; and for fear he should be treated as a spy, or one that came thither upon design, he feigned himself to be a mad man, (such there have been in every age, that even by idiots men might be taught to give God thanks for the use of their reason) that Achish might dismiss him as a contemptible man, rather than take cognizance of him as a dangerous man. And it had the effect he desired; by this stratagem he escaped the hand that otherwise would have handled him roughly. Now (1.) We cannot justify David in this dissimulation. It ill became an honest man to feign himself to be what he was not, and a man of honour to feign himself to be a fool and a mad man. If in sport we mimic those who have not so good an understanding as we think we have, we forget that God might have made their case ours. (2.) Yet we cannot but admire at the composedness of his spirit, and how far he was from any change of that, when he changed his behaviour. Even when he was in that fright, or rather in that danger only, his heart was so fixed, trusting in God, that even then he penned this excellent psalm, which hath as much in it of the marks of a calm sedate spirit, as any psalm in all the book; and there is something very nice too in the composure, for every verse begins with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order. Happy they who can thus keep their temper, and keep their graces in exercise, even when they are tempted to change their behaviour.

In this former part of the psalm,

1. David engageth and exciteth himself to praise God. Tho' it was his fault that he changed his behaviour, yet it was God's mercy that he escaped, and the mercy was so much the greater in that God did not deal with him according to the desert of his dissimulation, and we must in every thing give thanks. He resolves (1.) That he will praise God constantly. *I will bless the Lord at all times*, upon all occasions. He resolves to keep up stated times for this duty; to lay hold on all opportunities for it, and to renew his praises upon every fresh occurrence that furnisheth him with matter. If we hope to spend our eternity in praising God, it is fit we should spend as much as may be of our time in this work. (2.) That he will praise him openly; *his praise shall continually be in my mouth*. Thus he would shew how forward he was to own his obligations to the mercy of God, and how desirous to make others also sensible of theirs. (3.) That he will praise him heartily. *My soul shall make her boast in the Lord*, in my relation to him, my interest in him, and expectations from him. This is not vain glory to glory in the Lord.

2. He calls upon others to join with him herein. He expects they will, *ver. 2. The humble shall hear thereof*, both of my deliverance and of my thankfulness, and be glad that a good man has so much favour shewed him, and a good God so much honour done him. Those have most comfort in God's mercies, both to others and to themselves, that are humble, and have the least confidence in their own merit and sufficiency. It pleased David to think that God's favours to him would rejoice the heart of every Israelite.

Three things he would have us all to concur with him in.

1. In great and high thoughts of God, which we should express in magnifying him, and exalting his name, *ver. 3.* we cannot make God greater or higher than he is, but if we adore him as infinitely great and higher than the highest, he is pleased to reckon this magnifying and exalting him. This we must do together. God's praises sound best in concert; for so we praise him as the angels do in heaven. They that share in God's favour, as all the saints do, should concur in his praises; and we should be as desirous of the assistance of our friends in returning thanks for mercies, as in praying for them.

We have reason to join in thanksgiving to God,

(1.) For his readiness to hear prayer, which all the saints have had the comfort of, for he never said to any of them, *seek ye me in vain*. (1.) David for his part will give it under his hand that he has found him a prayer-hearing God, *ver. 4. I fought the Lord in my distress*, intreated his favour, begged his help, and he heard me, answered my request presently, and delivered me from all my fears, both from the death I feared, and from the disquietment and disturbance I was put into by my fear of it. The former he doth by his providence working for us, the latter by his grace working in us, to silence our fears, and still the tumult of the spirits: And this is the greater mercy of the two, because the thing we fear is our trouble only, but our unbelieving distrustful fear of it is our sin, nay, and many times it is more our torment too, than the thing itself would be, which perhaps would only touch the bone and the flesh, while the fear would prey upon the spirits, and put us out of the possession of our own soul. David's prayers helped to silence his fears; having fought the Lord, and left his case with him, he could with a great deal of ease expect the event. But David was a great and eminent man, we may not expect to be favoured as he was; have any others ever experienced the like benefit by prayer? Yes, (2.) Many besides him have looked unto God by faith and prayer, and have been lightened by it, *ver. 5.* It has wonderfully revived and comforted them, witness Hannah, who, when she had prayed, *went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad*. When we look to the world, we are darkened, are perplexed, and at a loss; but when we look unto God, from him we have the light both of direction and joy, and our way is made both plain and pleasant. These here spoken of, that looked unto God, had their expectations raised, and the event did not frustrate them, their faces were not ashamed of their confidence. But perhaps these also were persons of great eminency, like David himself, and upon that account were highly favoured, or their numbers made them considerable; nay, (3.) This poor man cried, a single person, mean and inconsiderable, whom no man looked upon with any respect, or looked after with any concern; yet he was as welcome to the throne of grace as David, or any of his worthies; the Lord heard him, took cognizance of his case and of his prayers, and *saved him out of all his troubles*, *ver. 6.* God will regard the prayer of the destitute, Psal. cii. 17. See Isa. lvii. 15.

(2.) For the ministration of the good angels about us, *ver. 7. The angel of the Lord, i. e. a guard of angels* (so some) but so unanimous in their service, as if they were but one, or a guardian angel, encampeth round about them that fear God, as the life-guard about the prince, and delivereth them. God makes use of the attendance of the good spirits, for the protection of his people from the malice and power of evil spirits, and more good offices the holy angels do us every day than we are aware of. Tho' in dignity and in capacity of nature they are very much superior to us, tho' they retain their primitive rectitude, which we have lost, tho' they have constant employment in the upper world to praise God, and are entitled to a constant rest and bliss there, yet in obedience to their Maker, and in love to those that bear his image, they condescend to minister to the saints, and stand up for them against the powers of darkness; they not only visit them, but encamp round about them, acting for their good as really, tho' not as sensibly, as for Jacob's, *Gen. xxxii. 1.* and Elisha's, *2 Kings vi. 17.* All the glory be to the God of the angels.

2. He would have us to join with him in kind and good thoughts of God, *ver. 8. O taste, and see, that the Lord is good*. The goodness of God includes both the beauty and amiableness of his being, and the bounty and beneficence of his providence and grace; and accordingly (1.) We must taste that he is a bountiful benefactor, relish the goodness of God in all his gifts to us, and reckon that the favour and sweetness of them. Let God's goodness be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. (2.) We must see that he is a beautiful being, and delight in the contemplation of his infinite perfections. By taste and sight, we both make discoveries, and take complacency; taste, and see God's goodness, *i. e. take notice of it*, and take the comfort of it, *1 Pet. ii. 3.* He is good, for he makes all those truly blessed that trust in him; let us therefore be so convinced of his goodness, as thereby to be encouraged in the worst of times to trust in him.

3. He would have us join with him in a resolution to seek God and serve him, and continue in his fear, *ver. 9. O fear the Lord, ye his saints*; when we taste and see that he is good, we must not forget that he is great, and greatly to be feared; nay, even

even his goodness is the proper object of a filial reverence and awe, *they shall fear the Lord and his goodness*, Hof. iii. 5. *Fear the Lord*, i. e. Worship him, and make conscience of your duty to him in every thing; not fear him and shun him, but fear him and seek him, *ver. 10.* as a people seek unto their God; apply yourselves to him, and portion yourselves in him. To encourage us to fear God and seek him, it is here promised that those that do so, even in this wanting world, shall want no good thing. *Heb. They shall not want all good things*, i. e. They shall so have all good things, as that they shall have no reason to complain of the want of any. As to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of the spiritual life, *2 Cor. xii. 9.* *Psal. lxxxiv. 11.* And as to this life, they shall have what is necessary to the support of it from the hand of God, as a father, he will feed them with food convenient; what further comforts they desire, they shall have them as far as infinite wisdom sees good, and what they want in one thing shall be made up in another. What God denies them, he will give them grace to be content without, and then they do not want it, *Deut. iii. 26.* Paul had all and abounded, because he was content, *Phil. iv. 11, 18.* Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency, want nothing, for in him they have enough. However it goes with the young lions, they shall lack and suffer hunger: they that live upon common providence, as the lions do, shall want that satisfaction which they have that live by faith in the promise. They that trust to themselves, and think their own hands sufficient for them, shall want, for bread is not always to the wise, but verily they shall be fed that trust in God, and desire to be at his finding. They that are ravenous and prey upon all about them, shall want, but *the meek shall inherit the earth*; they shall not want, that, with quietness, work and mind their own business; plain-hearted Jacob has pottage enough, when Esau the cunning hunter is ready to perish for hunger.

11. Come ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. 14. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace and pursue it. 15. The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. 16. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. 18. The LORD is high unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. 20. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

David in this latter part of the psalm undertakes to teach children; tho' a man of war, and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him; tho' now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people from his own experience. It doth not appear that he had now any children of his own, at least none that were grown up to a capacity of being taught; but by divine inspiration he instructs the children of his people. Those that were in years would not be taught by him, tho' he had offered them his service, *Psal. xxxii. 8.* but he has hopes that the tender branches will be more easily bent, and that children and young people will be more tractable, and therefore he calls together a congregation of them, *ver. 11.* Come, ye children that are now in your learning age, and are now to lay up a stock of knowledge which you must live upon all your days; ye children that are foolish and ignorant, and need to be taught: perhaps he intends especially those children whose parents neglected to instruct and catechise them, and it is a great piece of charity to put those children to school, whose parents are not in a capacity to teach them, as to feed those children whose parents have not bread for them. Observe, (1.) What he expects from them, *hearken unto me*, leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me. (2.) What he undertakes to teach them—*The fear of the Lord*, inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier, but he doth not say to the children, I will teach you to play on the harp, or to handle the sword, or spear, or draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state-policy, but I will teach you *the fear of the Lord*, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all

burnt-offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves, and to teach our children.

1. He supposeth that we all aim to be happy, *ver. 12.* *What man is he that desireth life?* i. e. (as it follows) not only to see many days, but to see good comfortable days; *non est vivere, sed valere vita.* It is asked, who wisheth to live a long and pleasant life? and it is easily answered, *who doth not?* Surely this must look further than time, and this present world; for man's life on earth at best consists but of few days; and those full of trouble. What man is he that would be eternally happy? that would see many days, as many as the days of heaven; that would see good in that world where all bliss is in perfection, without the least alloy; who would see that good before him now by faith and hope, and enjoy it shortly? Who would? alas, very few have that in their thoughts; most ask, *who will shew us any good?* but few ask, *what shall we do to inherit eternal life?* This question implies there are some such.

2. He prescribes the true and only way to happiness, both in this world and that to come, *ver. 13, 14.* Would we pass comfortably through the world, and out of the world, our constant care must be to keep a good conscience: and, in order to that, (1.) We must learn to bridle our tongues, and be careful what we say; that we never speak amiss to God's dishonour, or our neighbour's prejudice; *keep thy tongue from evil speaking*, lying and slandering. So great a way doth this go in religion, that if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; and so little a way doth religion go without this, that he that bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain. (2.) We must be upright and sincere in every thing we say, and not double tongued, our words must be the indications of our minds, our lips must be kept from speaking guile, either to God or man. (3.) We must leave all our sins, and resolve we will have no more to do with them. Depart from evil, from evil works and evil workers; from the sins others commit, and which we have formerly allowed ourselves in. (4.) It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and live to some purpose. We must not only depart from evil, but we must do good; good for ourselves, especially for our own souls, employing them well, furnishing them with a good treasure, and fitting them for another world; and, as we have ability and opportunity, we must do good to others also. (5.) Because nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails; which is the summary both of law and gospel, both of grace and glory, than strife and contention, which brings confusion and every evil work; we must seek peace and pursue it. Have a peaceable disposition, study the things that make for peace, do nothing to break the peace, and to make mischief. If peace seem to flee from us, we must pursue it; *follow peace with all men*, stick at no pains, no expence to preserve and recover peace, be willing to deny ourselves a great deal both in honour and interest for peace-sake. These excellent directions in the way to life and good, are transcribed into the New Testament, and made part of our gospel duty, *1 Pet. iii. 10, 11.* And perhaps David, in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss, will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.

3. He enforceth these directions, by setting before us the happiness of the godly in the love and favour of God, and the miserable state of the wicked under his displeasure. Here is life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, plainly stated before us, that we may choose life, and live. See *Isa. iii. 10, 11.*

1. *Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with them*, however they may bless themselves in their own way.

(1.) God is against them, and then they cannot but be miserable; sad is the case of that man who by his sin has made his Maker his enemy, his destroyer. *The face of the Lord is against them that do evil*, *ver. 16.* sometimes God is said to turn his face from them, *Jer. xviii. 17.* because they have forsaken him; here he is said to set his face against them, because they have fought against him: and for certain God is able to out-face the most proud and daring sinners, and can frown them into hell.

(2.) *Ruin is before them*: this will follow of course, if God be against them, for he is able both to kill, and to cast into hell. (1.) The land of the living shall be no place for them or theirs. When God sets his face against them, he shall not only cut them off, but cut off the remembrance of them, shall when they are alive, bury them in obscurity, when they are dead, shall bury them in oblivion. He shall root out their posterity, by whom they shall be remembered; he shall pour disgrace upon their achievements, which they gloried in, and for which they thought they should have been remembered. It is certain there is no lasting honour but that which comes from God. (2.) There shall be a sting in their death, *evil shall slay the wicked*, *ver. 21.* Their death shall be miserable, and so it will certainly be; tho' they die in a bed of down, or in the bed of honour. Death to them has a curse in it, and is the king of terrors; to them it is an evil, an only evil, it is very well observed by Dr Hammond, that the evil here, which slays the wicked, is the same word in the singular number that is used, *ver. 19.* for the afflictions of the righteous, to intimate that godly people have many troubles, and yet they do them no hurt; but are made to work for good to them, for God will

will deliver them out of them all; whereas wicked people have fewer troubles, fewer evils befall them, perhaps but one, and yet that one may prove their utter ruin. One trouble with a curse in it, kills and slays, and doth execution; but many, with a blessing in them, are harmless, nay, gainful. (3.) Desolation will be their everlasting portion; they that are wicked themselves oftentimes hate the righteous, name and thing, have an implacable enmity to them and their righteousness; but they shall be desolate, shall be condemned as guilty, and laid waste for ever; shall be for ever forsaken and abandoned of God and all good angels and men, and those that are so, are desolate indeed.

2. Yet, *say to the righteous, it shall be well with them*; all good people are under God's special favour and protection. We are here assured of that, under a great variety of instances and expressions.

1. God takes special notice of good people, and takes notice who have their eyes ever to him, and who make conscience of their duty to him. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous*, ver. 15. to direct and guide them, to protect and keep them. Parents that are very fond of a child, will not let it be out of their sight; none of God's children are ever from under his eye, but on them he looks with a singular complacency, as well as with a watchful and tender concern.

2. They are sure of an answer of peace to their prayers. All God's people are a praying people, and they cry in prayer, which notes great importunity; but is it to any purpose? Yes, (1.) God takes notice of what we say, ver. 17. *They cry, and the Lord heareth them*, and hears them so as to make it appear he has a regard to them. *His ears are open to their prayers*, to receive them all, and to receive them readily, and with delight. Tho' he has been a God hearing prayer, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, yet his ear is not heavy. There is no rhetoric, nothing charming in a cry, yet God's ears are open to it, as the tender mother's to the cry of her sucking child, which another would take no notice of. *The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth*, ver. 17. This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God, and it is their constant comfort, that God hears them. (2.) He not only takes notice of what we say, but is ready to us for our relief, ver. 18. *He is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth them*. Note, 1. It is the character of the righteous, whose prayers God will hear, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, that is, humbled for sin, and emptied of self; they are low in their own eyes, and have no confidence in their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only. 2. Those who are so, have God nigh unto them, to comfort and support them, that the spirit may not be broken more than is meet, lest it should fail before him. See *Isa. lvii. 15*. Tho' God is high, and dwells on high, yet he is near to those, who, being of a contrite spirit, know how to value his favour, and will save them from sinking under their burthens; he is near them to good purpose.

3. They are taken under the special protection of the divine government, ver. 20. He keepeth all his bones; not only his soul but his body; not only his body in general, but every bone in it, *not one of them is broken*. He that has a broken heart, shall not have a broken bone; for David himself had found, that when he had a contrite heart the broken bones were made to rejoice, *Psal. li. 8, 17*. One would not expect to meet with any thing of Christ here, and yet this scripture is said to be fulfilled in him, *John xix. 36*. when the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with him, but did not break his, they being under the protection of this promise, as well as of the type, even the paschal lamb, *a bone of him shall not be broken*; the promises being made good to Christ, through him are sure to all the seed. It doth not follow but that a good man may have a broken bone; but many a time by the watchful providence of God concerning him, it is wonderfully prevented, and the preservation of his bones is the effect of this promise, and if he have a broken bone, sooner or later, it shall be made whole, at furthest at the resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power.

4. They are, and shall be, delivered out of their troubles: (1.) It is supposed that they have their share of crosses in this world, perhaps a greater share than others. In the world they must have tribulation, that they may be conformed both to the will of God, and to the example of Christ, ver. 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, witness David and his afflictions, *Psal. cxxxii. 1*. There are those that hate them, ver. 21. and they are continually aiming to do them a mischief; their God loves them, and therefore corrects them, so that between the mercy of heaven, and the malice of hell, the afflictions of the righteous must needs be many. (2.) God has engaged for their deliverance and salvation. *He delivereth them out of all their troubles*, ver. 17. And again, ver. 19, *He saveth them*, ver. 18. so that tho' they may fall into trouble, it shall not be their ruin. This promise of their deliverance is explained, ver. 22. *Whatever troubles befall them*, (1.) They shall not hurt their better part. *The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants*, from the power of the grave, *Psal. xlix. 15*; and from the sting of every affliction. He keeps them from sinning in their troubles; which is the only thing that would do them a mischief, and keeps them

from despair, and from being put out of the possession of their own souls. (2.) They shall not hinder their everlasting bliss; *none of them that trust in him shall be desolate*, i. e. They shall not be comfortless, for they shall not be cut off from their communion with God. No man is desolate, but he whom God has forsaken, nor is any man undone till he is in hell. Those that are God's faithful servants, that make it their care to please him, and their business to honour him, and in doing so trust him to protect and reward them, and with good thoughts of him, refer themselves to him have reason to be easy, whatever befalls them, for they are safe, and shall be happy.

In singing these verses, let us be confirmed in the choice we have made of the ways of God; let us be quickened in his service, and greatly encouraged by the assurances he has given of the particular care he takes of all those that faithfully adhere to him.

P S A L M XXXV.

David in this psalm appeals to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, against his enemies that hated and persecuted him. It is supposed that Saul and his party are the persons he means, for with them he had the greatest struggles, (1.) He complains to God of the injuries they did him, they strove with him, fought against him, ver. 1, persecuted him, ver. 3. sought his ruin, ver. 4, 7. accused him falsely, ver. 11. abused him basely, ver. 15, 16. and all his friends, ver. 20, and triumphed over him, ver. 21, 25, 26. (2.) He pleads his own innocency, that he never gave them any provocation, ver. 7, 19. but, on the contrary, had studied to oblige them, ver. 12, 13, 14. (3.) He prays to God to protect and deliver him, and appear for him, ver. 1, 2. to comfort him, ver. 3. to be nigh to him, and rescue him, ver. 17, 22. to plead his cause, ver. 23, 24. to defeat all the designs of his enemies against him, ver. 3, 4. and to disappoint their expectations of his fall, ver. 19, 25, 26. and, lastly, to countenance all his friends and encourage them, ver. 27. (4.) He prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, ver. 4, 5, 6, 8. (5.) He promiseth himself that he shall yet see better days, ver. 9, 10. and promiseth God that he will then attend him with his praises, ver. 18, 28. In singing this psalm, and praying over it, we must take heed of applying it to any little peevish quarrels and enmities of our own, and of expressing by it any uncharitable revengeful resentments of injuries done to us, for Christ has taught us to forgive our enemies, and not to pray against them, but to pray for them, as he did; but, (1.) we may comfort ourselves with the testimony of our consciences, concerning our innocency; with reference to those that are any way injurious to us, and with hopes that God will in his own way and time right us, and in the mean time support us. (2.) We ought to apply it to the publick enemies of Christ and his kingdom, typified by David and his kingdom, to resent the indignities done to Christ's honour, to pray to God to plead the just and injured cause of christianity, and serious godliness, and to believe that God will in due time glorify his own name in the ruin of all the irreconcilable enemies of his church, that will not repent to give him glory.

¶ A psalm of David.

1. **P**LEAD my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. 4. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. 5. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. 6. Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. 7. For without cause have they hid for me their net, in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. 8. Let destruction come upon him at unawares, and let his net that he hath hid, catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall. 9. And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. 10. All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy, from him that spoileth him?

In these verses we have,

1. David's representation of his case to God, setting forth the restless rage and malice of his persecutors; he was God's servant, expressly appointed by him to be what he was, followed his conduct, and aimed at his glory in the way of duty, had lived (as St Paul speaks) *in all good conscience before God unto this day*; and yet there were those that strove with him, that did their utmost to oppose his advancement, and made all the interest they could against him, they fought against him, *ver. 1.* not only undermined him closely and secretly, but openly avowed their opposition to him, and set themselves to do him all the mischief they could. They persecuted him with an unwearied enmity, *sought after his soul*, *ver. 4. i. e.* his life, no less would satisfy their bloody minds; they aimed to disquiet his spirit, and put that into disorder; nor was it a sudden passion against him that they harboured, but an inveterate malice: they devised his hurt, laid their heads together, and set their wits on work, not only to do him a mischief, but to find out ways and means to ruin him. They treated him, who was the greatest blessing of his country, as if he had been the curse and plague of it, hunted him as a dangerous beast of prey, they digged a pit for him, and laid a net in it, that they might have him at their mercy, *ver. 7.* They took a great deal of pains in persecuting him, for they digged a pit, *Psal. vii. 15.* and very close and crafty they were in carrying on their designs; the old serpent taught them subtilty, they hid their net from David and his friends, but in vain, for they could not hide it from God. And lastly, he found himself an unequal match for them. His enemy, especially Saul, was too strong for him, *ver. 10.* for he had the army at his command, and assumed to himself the sole power of making laws, and giving judgment, attainted and condemned whom he pleased, carried not a scepter, but a javelin in his hand, to cast at any man that stood in his way, such was the manner of the king, and all about him must do as he bid them, right or wrong. The king's word is a law, and every thing must be carried with a high hand, he has fields and vineyards, and preferments at his dispose, *1 Sam. xxii. 7.* But David is poor and needy, has nothing to make friends with, and therefore has none to take his part, but men (as we say) of broken fortunes, *1 Sam. xxii. 2.* and therefore no marvel that Saul spoiled him of what little he had got, and the interest he had made. If the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, who can contend with them? Note, It is no new thing for the most righteous men, and the most righteous cause, to meet with many mighty and malicious enemies; Christ himself is striven with, and fought against, and war made upon the holy seed, and we are not to marvel at the matter, it is a fruit of the old enmity, in the seed of the serpent, against the seed of the woman.

2. His appeal to God concerning his integrity, and the justice of his cause. If a fellow-subject had wronged him, he might have appealed to his prince, as St Paul did to Cæsar; but when his prince wronged him, he appealed to his God, who is Prince and Judge of the kings of the earth. *Plead my cause, O Lord*, *ver. 1.* Note, A righteous cause may with the greatest satisfaction imaginable be laid before a righteous God, and referred to him to give judgment upon it; for he perfectly knows the merits of it, holds the balance exactly even, and with him there is no respect of persons. God knew that they were without cause his enemies, and that they had without cause digged pits for him, *ver. 7.* Note, It will be a comfort to us when men do us wrong, if our consciences can witness for us that we have never done them any. It was so to St Paul, *Acts xxv. 10.* *To the Jews have I done no wrong.* We are apt to justify our uneasiness at the injuries men do us, that we never gave them any cause to use us so, whereas this should more than any thing make us easy, for then we may the more securely expect that God will plead our cause.

3. His prayers to God to manifest himself both for him and to him in this trial. (1.) For him: he prays that God would fight against his enemies, so as to disable them to hurt him, and defeat their designs against him, *ver. 1.* That he would take hold of shield and buckler, for the Lord is a man of war, *Exod. xv. 3.* and that he would stand up for his help, *ver. 2.* for he had few that would stand up for him, and if he had never so many, they would stand him in no stead without God. That God would stop their way, that they might not overtake him when he fled from them; this prayer we may put up against our persecutors, that God would restrain them, and stop their way. (2.) To him: *say unto my soul, I am thy salvation*, *i. e.* Let me have inward comfort under all these outward troubles, to support my soul which they strike at. Let God be my salvation, not only my saviour, out of my present troubles, but my everlasting bliss; let me have that salvation not only which he is the author of, but which consists in his favour. And let me know it, let me have the comfortable assurance of it in my own breast. If God by his Spirit witness to our spirits that he is our salvation, we have enough, we need desire no more to make us happy; and this is a powerful support when men persecute us. If God be our friend, no matter who is our enemy.

4. His prospect of the destruction of his enemies, which he prays for, not in malice or revenge; we find how patiently he bore Shimei's curses, so let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him, and we cannot suppose that he that was so meek in his conversation, should give vent to any intemperate heat or passion in his devotion; but by the spirit of prophecy he foretells the just judgments of God, that would come upon them for their great wickedness, their malice, cruelty, and perfidiousness, and especially their enmity to the counsels of God, the interests of religion, and that reformation which they knew David, if ever he had power in his hand, would be an instrument of. They seemed to be hardened in their sins, and to be of the number of those who have sinned unto death, and are not to be prayed for, *Jer. vii. 16.—xi. 14.—xiv. 11.* *1 John v. 16.* As for Saul himself, it is probable David knew that God had rejected him, and had forbidden Samuel to mourn for him, *1 Sam. xvi. 1.* And these predictions look further, and read the doom of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, as appears by comparing *Rom. xi. 9, 10.*

He here prays, (1.) Against his many enemies, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* *Let them be confounded, &c.* Or, as Dr Hammond reads it, *They shall be confounded, they shall be turned back.* This may be taken as a prayer for their repentance, for all penitents are put to shame for their sins, and turned back from them; or if they were not brought to repentance, that they might be defeated in their designs against him, and so put to shame. But though they should in some degree prevail, yet he foresees that it would be to their own ruin at last; they shall be as chaff before the wind, so unable will wicked men be to stand before the judgments of God, and so certainly will they be driven away by them, *Psal. i. 4.* Their way shall be *dark and slippery, darkness and slipperiness*; (so the margin reads it) the way of sinners is so, for they walk in darkness, and in continual danger of falling into sin, into hell; and it will prove so at last, for *their foot shall slide in due time*, *Deut. xxxii. 35.* But this is not the worst of it; even chaff before the wind may perhaps be stopped and find a place of rest, and tho' the way be dark and slippery, it is possible a man may keep footing; but it is here foretold that the angel of the Lord shall chase them, *ver. 5.* so that they shall find no rest; shall persecute them, *ver. 6.* so that they cannot possibly escape the pit of destruction. As God's angels encamp about them that fear him, so they encamp against them that fight against him. They are the ministers of his justice as well as of his mercy. Those that make God their enemy, make all the holy angels their enemies. (2.) He prays against his one mighty enemy, *ver. 8.* *Let destruction come upon him.* It is probable he means Saul, who laid snares for him, and aimed at his destruction. David vowed his hand should not be upon him, he would not be judge in his own cause; but at the same time foretold that *the Lord would smite him*, *1 Sam. xxvi. 10.* and here, that the net he had hid should catch himself, and into *that very destruction he should fall*, which was remarkably fulfilled in the ruin of Saul, for he had laid a plot to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines, *1 Sam. xviii. 25.* that was the net which he hid for him, under pretence of doing him honour, and in that very net was he himself taken, for he fell by the hand of the Philistines, when his day came to fall.

5. His prospect of his own deliverance, which having committed his cause to God, he did not doubt of, *ver. 9, 10.* (1.) He hoped that he should have the comfort of it; *my soul shall be joyful*, not in mine own ease and safety, but in the Lord, and in his favour; in his promise, and in his salvation, according to the promise. Joy in God, and in his salvation, is the only true solid satisfying joy. They whose souls are sorrowful in the Lord, that sow in tears, and sorrow after a godly sort, need not question but that in due time their souls shall be joyful in the Lord, for gladness is sown for them, and they shall at last enter into the joy of their Lord. (2.) He promised that then God should have the glory of it, *ver. 10.* *All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?* (1.) He will praise God with the whole man, with all that is within him, and with all the strength and vigour of his soul, intimated by his bones, which are within the body, and are the strength of it. (2.) He will praise him as one of peerless and unparalleled perfection; we cannot express how great and good God is, and therefore must praise him by acknowledging him a none-such; *Lord, who is like unto thee?* No such patron of oppressed innocency, no such punisher of triumphant tyranny. The formation of our bones so wonderfully, so curiously, *Eccl. xi. 5.* *Psal. cxxxix. 16.* the serviceableness of our bones, and the preservation of them, and especially the life which at the resurrection shall be breathed upon the dry bones, and make them flourish as an herb, oblige every bone in our bodies, if it could speak; to say, *Lord, who is like unto thee?* and willingly to undergo any services or sufferings for him.

11. False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. 12. They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul. 13. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth:

sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14. I behaved my self as though *he had been* my friend, or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. 15. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not. 16. With hypocritical mockers in feasts: they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

Two very ill things David here lays to the charge of his enemies, to make good his appeal to God against them; perjury and ingratitude.

1. Perjury, *ver. 11.* When Saul would have David attainted of treason, in order to his being outlawed, perhaps, he did it with the formalities of a legal prosecution, produced witnesses which swore some treasonable words, or overt-acts, against him, and he being not present to clear himself, or if he had, it had been all one, Saul adjudged him a traitor; this he complains of here as the highest piece of injustice imaginable, *false witnesses did rise up*, who would swear any thing, *they laid to my charge things that I knew not*, nor ever thought of. See how much the honours, estates, liberties, and lives, even of the best men, lie at the mercy of the worst, against whose false oaths, innocency itself is no fence; and what reason we have to acknowledge with thankfulness the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, to which it is owing that there is not more mischief done that way, than is. This instance of the wrong done to David, was typical, and had its accomplishment in the Son of David, against whom false witnesses did arise, *Matth. xxvi. 60.* And if we be at any time charged with what we are innocent of, let us not think it strange, as tho' some new thing happened to us, so persecuted they the prophets, even the great Prophet.

2. Ingratitude: Call a man ungrateful and you can call him no worse; this was the character of David's enemies, *ver. 12.* *They rewarded me evil for good.* A great deal of good service he had done to his king, witness his harp, witness Goliath's sword, witness the foreskins of the Philistines; and yet his king vowed his death, and his country is made too hot for him. This is *to the spoiling of his soul*, i. e. this base unkind usage robs him of his comfort, and cuts him to the heart more than any thing else.

Nay, he had not only deserved well of the publick, but of those particular persons that were now most bitter against him. Probably, it was then well known who he meant, it may be Saul himself for one, whom he was sent for to attend upon, when he was melancholy and ill, and to whom he was serviceable to drive away the evil spirit, not with his harp, but with his prayers; to others of the courtiers, it is likely, he had shewed this respect, while he lived at court, who now were of all others most abusive to him: Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom this wicked world was very ungrateful, *John x. 32.* *Many good works have I shewed you from my Father, for which of those do you stone me?* David here shews,

1. How tenderly, and with what a cordial affection he had carried it towards them in their afflictions, *ver. 13, 14.* *They were sick.* Note, Even the palaces and courts of princes, are not exempt from the jurisdiction of death, and the visitation of sickness. Now when these people were sick, (1.) David mourned for them, and sympathized with them in their grief. They were nothing a-kin to him, he was under no obligations to them, would lose nothing by their death, but, perhaps, be a gainer by it, and yet he behaved himself as tho' they had been his nearest relations, purely from a principle of compassion and humanity. David was a man of war, and of a bold, stout spirit, and yet was thus susceptible of the impressions of sympathy, forgot the bravery of the hero, and seemed wholly made up of love and pity; it was a rare composition of hardness and tenderness, courage and compassion, in the same breast. Observe, He took on as for a brother or mother, which intimates that it is our duty, and well becomes us to lay to heart the sickness, and sorrow, and death, of our near relations. Those that do not are justly stigmatized as without natural affection. (2.) He prayed for them; he discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls, and since he could not otherwise be helpful to them, he helped them with his prayers to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of one who had so great an interest in heaven, were of more value than, perhaps, they knew and considered. With his prayers he joined humiliation and self-affliction, both in his diet, he fasted, at least from pleasant bread, and in his dress, he clothed himself with sackcloth, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin; for this was the guise and practice of a penitent: We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for them themselves. His fasting also put an edge upon his praying, and was an expression of the ardency of it; he was so intent in his devotions, that he had no appetite to meat, nor would allow himself time for eating. *My prayer returned into mine own bosom*, i. e. I had the comfort of

No. xl.

having done my duty; and of having approved myself a loving neighbour, tho' I could not thereby win upon them, nor make them my friends. We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful soever they are, for our rejoicing will be this, *the testimony of our conscience.*

2. How basely, and insolently, and with what a brutish enmity, and worse than brutish, they had carried it towards him, *ver. 15, 16.* *In mine adversity they rejoiced.* When he fell under the frowns of Saul, was banished the court, and persecuted as a criminal, they were pleased, were glad at his calamities, and got together in their drunken clubs, to make themselves and one another merry with the disgrace of this great favourite: Well might he call them *abjects*, for nothing could be more vile and fordid, than to triumph in the fall of a man of such unstained honour, and consummate virtue. But this was not all; (1.) They tore him, rent his good name without mercy, said all the ill they could of him, and fastned upon him all the reproach their cursed wit and malice could reach to. (2.) *They gnashed upon him with their teeth*, i. e. they never spoke of him but with the greatest indignation imaginable, as those that would have eaten him up, if they could. David was the fool in the play, and his disappointment all the table-talk of the hypocritical mockers at feasts, it was the song of the drunkards; the comedians, who may fitly be called hypocritical mockers, (for what doth an hypocrite signify but a stage-player?) and whose comedies, it is likely, were acted at feasts and balls, chose David for their subject, bantered and abused him, while the auditory, in token of their agreement with the plot, hummed, and *gnashed upon him with their teeth*; such has often been the hard fate of the best of men: The apostles were made a spectacle to the world. David was looked upon with ill-will for no other reason, but because he was caressed by the people: It is a vexation of spirit which attends even a right work, that *for this a man is envied of his neighbour*, *Eccles. iv. 4.* And *who can stand before envy?* *Prov. xxvii. 4.*

17. Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. 18. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. 19. Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: *neither* let them wink with the eye, that hate me without a cause. 20. For they speak not peace, but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land. 21. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. 22. *This* thou hast seen, O LORD, keep not silence: O LORD, be not far from me. 23. Stir up thy self, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord. 24. Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness, and let them not rejoice over me. 25. Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, we have swallowed him up. 26. Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together, that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour, that magnify *themselves* against me. 27. Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. 28. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise all the day long.

In these verses, as before,

1. David describes the great injustice, malice, and insolence of his persecutors, pleading this with God, as a reason why he should protect him from them, and appear against them. (1.) They were very unrighteous, they were his enemies wrongfully, for he never gave them any provocation; *they hated him without a cause*; nay, for that for which they ought rather to have loved and honoured him. This is quoted with application to Christ, and is said to be fulfilled in him, *John xv. 25.* *They hated me without cause.* (2.) They were very rude; they could not find in their hearts to shew him common civility; they speak not peace; if they meet him, they had not the good manners to give him the time of the day; like Joseph's brethren, that could not *speak peaceably to him*, *Gen. xxxvii. 4.* (3.) They were very proud and scornful, *ver. 21.* *They opened their mouth wide against me*, i. e. they shouted and huzza'd when they saw his fall; they bawled after him when he was forced to quit the court, Aha, aha, this is the day we longed to see. (4.) They were very barbarous and base, for they trampled upon him when he was down, rejoiced at his hurt, and *magnified themselves against him*, *ver. 26.* *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper, & odit Damnatos.* Thus when the Son of David was run upon by the rulers, the people cried, *Crucify him, crucify him.* (5.) They set

set themselves against all the sober good people that adhered to David, *ver. 20. They devised deceitful matters, to trepan and ruin them that are quiet in the land.* Note, 1. It is the character of the godly in the land, that they are the quiet in the land; that they live in all dutiful subjection to government and governors in the Lord, and endeavour as much as in them lies to live peaceably with all men, however they have been misrepresented as enemies to Cæsar, and hurtful to kings and provinces. *I am for peace, Psal. cxx. 7.* 2. Tho' the people of God are, and study to be, a quiet people; yet it has been the common practice of their enemies to devise deceitful matters against them. All the hellish arts of malice and falshood are made use of, to render them odious or despicable, their words and actions misconstrued, even that which they abhor fathered upon them, laws made to ensnare them, *Dan. vi. 4.* and all to ruin them and root them out. They that hated David, thought scorn, like Haman, to lay hands on him alone, but contrived to involve all the religious people of the land in the same ruin with him.

2. He appeals to God against them, the *God to whom vengeance belongs*; appeals to his knowledge, *ver. 22. This thou hast seen*; they had falsely accused him, but God that knows all things, knew that he did not falsely accuse them, nor make them worse than really they were. They had carried on their plots against him with a great deal of secrecy, *ver. 15. I knew it not till long after, when they themselves gloried in it*; but thine eye was upon them in their close cabals, and thou art a witness of all they have said and done against me and thy people. He appeals to God's justice, *Awake to my judgment, even to my cause*, and let it have a hearing at thy bar, *ver. 23. Judge me, O Lord my God, i. e. pass sentence upon this appeal, according to the righteousness of thy nature and government*: See this explained by Solomon, *1 Kings viii. 31, 32.* When thou art appealed to, *hear in heaven, and judge by condemning the wicked, and justifying the righteous.*

3. He prays earnestly to God to appear graciously for him and his friends, against his and their enemies, that by his providence, the struggle might issue to the honour and comfort of David, and to the conviction and confusion of his persecutors.

(1.) He prays that God would act for him, and not stand by as a spectator, *ver. 17. Lord, how long wilt thou look on? How long wilt thou connive at the wickedness of the wicked? Rescue my soul from the destructions they are plotting against it; rescue my darling, my only one, from the lions. My soul is my only one, and therefore the greater is the shame if I neglect it, and the greater the loss if I lose it: It is my only one, and therefore ought to be my darling, ought to be carefully protected and provided for. It is my soul that is in danger, Lord rescue it; it doth in a peculiar manner belong to the Father of spirits, therefore claim thine own; it is thine, save it! Lord keep not silence!* as if thou didst consent to what is done against me! *Lord, be not far from me!* *ver. 22.* as if I were a stranger that thou art not concerned for; let not me be beheld afar off, as the proud are

(2.) He prays that his enemies might have cause to rejoice, *ver. 19. Let them not rejoice over me*; and again, *ver. 24. not so much because it would be a mortification to him to be trampled upon by the abjects, but because it would turn to the dishonour of God, and the reproach of his confidence in God, it would harden the hearts of his enemies in their wickedness, and confirm them in their enmity to him, and would be a great discouragement to all the pious Jews that were friends to his righteous cause.* He prays that he might never be in such imminent danger, as that they should say in their hearts, *Ah, so would we have it, ver. 25. much more that he might not be reduced to such extremity, as that they should say, We have swallowed him up, for then they will reflect upon God himself.* But, on the contrary, that they might be *ashamed and brought to confusion together, ver. 26. as before, ver. 4.* he desires his innocency might be so cleared, as that they might be ashamed of the calumnies with which they had loaded him, that his interest might be so confirmed, as that they might be ashamed of their designs against him, and their expectations of his ruin, that they might either be brought to that shame which would be a step towards their reformation; or that that might be their portion, which would be their everlasting misery.

(3.) He prays that his friends might have cause to rejoice and give glory to God, *ver. 27. notwithstanding the arts that were used to blacken David, and make him odious, and to frighten people from owning him: there were some that favoured his righteous cause, that knew he was wronged, and bore a good affection to him, and he prays for them*; (1.) That they might rejoice with him in his joys. It is a great pleasure to all that are good, to see an honest man, and an honest cause, prevail and prosper, and those that heartily espouse the interests of God's people, and are willing to take their lot with them, even when they are run down and trampled upon, shall in due time shout for joy and be glad, for the righteous cause will, at length, be a victorious cause. (2.) That they might join with him in his praises, let them say continually, *the Lord be magnified, by us and others, who hath pleasures in the prosperity of his servant.*

Note, (1.) The great God hath pleasure in the prosperity of good people, not only of his family, the church in general, but of every particular servant in his family; he hath pleasure in the prosperity both of their temporal and of their spiritual affairs, and delights not in their griefs; for he doth not afflict willingly, and we ought therefore to have pleasure in their prosperity, and not to envy it. (2.) When God in his providence shews his good will to the prosperity of his servants, and the pleasure he takes in it, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness to his praise, and to say, *the Lord be magnified.*

Lastly, The mercy he hoped to win by prayer, he promiseth to wear with praise; *I will give thee thanks, as the author of my deliverance, ver. 18. and my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, the justice of thy judgments, and the equity of all thy dispensations*; and this, (1.) Publickly, as one that took a pleasure in owning his obligations to his God, so far was he from being ashamed of them, he will do it in the great congregation, and among much people, that God might be honoured, and many edified. (2.) Constantly; he will speak God's praise every day, (so it may be read) and all the day long, for it is a subject that will never be exhausted, no not by the endless praises of saints and angels.

P S A L M XXXVI.

It is uncertain when, and upon what occasion, David penned this psalm, probably, when he was struck at, either by Saul or by Absalom; for in it he complains of the malice of his enemies against him, but triumphs in the goodness of God to him. We are here led to consider, and it will do us good to consider seriously, (1.) The sinfulness of sin, and how mischievous it is, ver. 1—4. (2.) The goodness of God, and how gracious he is, (1.) To all his creatures in general, ver. 5, 6. (2.) To his own people in a special manner, ver. 7—9. With which the psalmist is encouraged to pray for all the saints, ver. 10. for himself in particular, and his own preservation, ver. 11. and to triumph in the certain fall of his enemies, ver. 12. If in singing this psalm our hearts be duly affected with the hatred of sin, and satisfaction in God's loving-kindness, we sing it with grace and understanding.

¶ To the chief musician, *A psalm of David the servant of the Lord.*

1. **T**HE transgression of the wicked faith within my heart, *that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* 2. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. 3. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. 4. He deviseth mischief upon his bed, he setteth himself in a way *that is not good*; he abhorreth not evil.

David, in the title of this psalm, is stiled the servant of the Lord: why in this, and not in any other, except in *Psal. xviii. tit.* no reason can be given; but so he was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but as a king, as a prophet, as one employed in serving the interests of God's kingdom among men, more immediately, and more eminently than any other in his day. He glories in it, *Psal. cxvi. 16.* it is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest of men, to be the servants of the great God; it is the highest preferment a man is capable of in this world.

David in these verses describes the wickedness of the wicked; whether he means his persecutors in particular, or all notorious gross sinners in general, is not certain. But we have here sin in its causes, and sin in its colours, in its root, and in its branches.

1. Here is the root of bitterness from which all the wickedness of the wicked comes. It takes rise,

(1.) From their contempt of God, and the want of a due regard to him, *ver. 1. The transgression of the wicked, (as it is described afterwards, ver. 3, 4.) faith within my heart, i. e. makes me to conclude within myself, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, for if there were, he would not talk and act so extravagantly as he doth; he would not, he durst not break the laws of God, and violate his covenants with him, if he had any awe of his majesty, or dread of his wrath. Fitly therefore is it brought into the form of indictments by our law, that the criminal not having the fear of God before his eyes, did so and so. The wicked did not openly renounce the fear of God, but their transgression whispered it secretly into the minds of all those that knew any thing of the nature of piety and impiety; David concluding concerning those who lived at large, that they lived without God in the world.*

(2.) From

(2.) From their conceit of themselves, and a cheat they willfully put upon their own souls, *ver. 2. He flattered himself in his own eyes*; i. e. while he goes on in sin, he thinks he doth wisely and well for himself, and either doth not see, or will not own the evil and danger of his wicked practices; he calls evil good, and good evil; his licentiousness he pretends to be but his just liberty; his fraud passeth for his prudence and policy, and his persecuting the people of God, he suggests to himself is a piece of necessary justice. If his own conscience threaten him for what he doth, he saith, *God will not require it, I shall have peace tho' I go on.* Note, Sinners are self-destroyers, by being self-flatterers; Satan could not deceive them, if they did not deceive themselves. But will the cheat last always? no, the day is coming when the sinner will be undeceived, when his iniquity shall be found to be hateful. Iniquity is a hateful thing; it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which his pure and jealous eye cannot endure to look upon. It is hurtful to the sinner himself, and therefore ought to be hateful; but it is not so, he rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel; because of the secular profit, and sensual pleasure which perhaps attends it; yet *the meat in his bowels will be turned, it will be the gall of asps*, Job xx. 13, 14. when their consciences are convinced, and sin appears in its true colours, and makes them a terror to themselves; when the cup of trembling is put into their hands, and they are made to drink the dregs of it, then their iniquity will be found hateful, and their self-flattery, their unspeakable folly, and an aggravation of their condemnation.

2. Here are the cursed branches which spring from this root of bitterness. The sinner defies God, and even defies himself, and then what can be expected, but that he should go all to naught? these two were the first inlets of sin. Men do not fear God, and therefore they flatter themselves, and then,

1. They make no conscience of what they say; true or false, right or wrong, *ver. 3. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit*; contrived to do wrong, and yet to cover it with specious and plausible pretences: It is no marvel, if those that deceive themselves, contrive how to deceive all mankind; for who will they be true to, that are false to their own souls?

2. What little good there has been in them, is gone; the sparks of virtue extinguished, their convictions baffled, their good beginnings come to nothing, they have left off to be wise and to do good. They seemed to have been under the direction of wisdom, and the government of religion, but they have broken these bonds in sunder; they have shaken off their religion, and therewith their wisdom. Note, They that leave off to do good, leave off to be wise.

3. Having left off to do good, they contrive to do hurt, and to be vexatious to those about them that are good, and do good, *ver. 4. He deviseth mischief upon his bed.* Note, 1. Omissions make way for commissions, when men leave off doing good, leave off praying, leave off their attendance on God's ordinances, and their duty to him, the devil easily makes them his agents, his instruments to draw those that will be drawn into sin, and those that will not, to draw them into trouble. Those that leave off to do good, begin to do evil; the devil, being an apostate from his innocency, soon became a tempter to Eve, and a persecutor of righteous Abel. 2. It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it, to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits a-work, to contrive to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management; with the subtilty as well as the malice of the old serpent. To devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his word, *Mic. ii. 1.* This argues the sinner's heart fully set in him to do evil.

4. Having entred into the way of sin, that way that is not good, that neither has good in it, nor good at the end of it, they persist, and resolve to persevere in that way. He sets himself to execute the mischief he has devised, and nothing shall be withholden from him which he has purposed to do, tho' it be never so contrary both to his duty and to his true interest. If sinners did not steel their hearts, and brazen their faces with obstinacy and impudence, they could not go on in their evil ways, in such a direct opposition to all that is just and good.

5. Doing evil themselves, they have no dislike at all of it in others. He abhorreth not evil, but, on the contrary, takes pleasure in it, and is glad to see others as bad as himself. Or, this may speak his impenitency in sin: They that have done evil, if God give them repentance, abhor the evil they have done, and themselves because of it; it is bitter in the reflection, however sweet it was in the commission; but these hardened sinners have such seared stupified consciences, that they never reflect upon their sins afterwards, with any regret or remorse, but stand to what they have done, as if they could justify it before God himself.

Some think David, in all this particularly means Saul, who had cast off the fear of God, and left off all goodness; who pretended kindness to him, when he gave him his daughter to wife; but at the same time was devising mischief against him. But we are under no necessity of limiting ourselves so in the exposition of it; there are too many among us to whom the description agrees, which is to be greatly lamented.

5. Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. 6. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. 7. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. 8. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. 9. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. 10. O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. 11. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me. 12. There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

David having looked round with grief upon the wickedness of the wicked, here looks up with comfort upon the goodness of God; a subject as delightful as the former was distasteful, and very proper to be set in the balance against it. Observe,

1. His meditations upon the grace of God. He sees the world polluted, himself endangered, and God dishonoured by the transgressions of the wicked; but of a sudden he turns his eye, and heart, and speech to God. *However it be, yet thou art good.* He here acknowledgeth,

(1.) The transcendent perfections of the divine nature: Among men we have often reason to complain, there is *no truth or mercy*, Hof. iv. 1. *no judgment nor justice*, Isa. v. 7. But all these may be found in God without the least alloy. Whatever is missing, or amiss, in the world, we are sure there is nothing missing, nothing amiss, in him that governs it.

(1.) He is a God of inexhaustible goodness. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.* If men shut up the bowels of their compassion, yet with God, at the throne of his grace, we shall find mercy. When men are devising mischief against us, God's thoughts concerning us, if we cleave closely to him, are thoughts of good. On earth we meet with little content, but a great deal of disquiet and disappointment; but in the heavens, where the mercy of God reigns in perfection, and to eternity, there is all satisfaction; there therefore, if we would be easy, let us have our conversation, and there let us long to be. How bad soever the world is, let us never think the worse of God, or of his government; but from the abundance of wickedness that is among men, let us take occasion, instead of reflecting upon God's purity, as if he countenanced sin, to admire his patience, that he bears so much with those that so impudently provoke him; nay, and causeth his sun to shine, and his rain to fall upon them. If God's mercy were not in the heavens, i. e. infinitely above the mercies of any creature, he would long ere this have drowned the world again. See *Isa. lv. 8, 9. Hof. xi. 9.*

(2.) He is a God of inviolable truth, *Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.* Tho' God suffers wicked people to do a great deal of mischief, yet he is, and will be, faithful to his threatenings against sin, and there will come a day when he will reckon with them; he is faithful also to his covenant with his people, which cannot be broken; not one jot or tittle of the promises of it defeated by all the malice of earth and hell. This is matter of great comfort to all good people, that tho' men are false, God is faithful; men speak vanity; but the words of the Lord are pure words. God's faithfulness reacheth so high, that it doth not change with the weather, as mens doth, for it reacheth to the skies, so it should be read, (as some think) above the clouds; and all the changes of the lower region.

(3.) He is a God of incontestible justice and equity, *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains*, so immovable and inflexible itself, and so conspicuous and evident to all the world; for no truth is more certain or more plain than this, that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and that he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures. Even *when clouds and darkness are round about him, yet judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne*, Psal. xcvi. 2.

(4.) He is a God of unsearchable wisdom and design. *Thy judgments are a great deep*, not to be fathomed with the line and plummet of any finite understanding; as his power is sovereign, which he owes not any account of to us, so his method is singular and mysterious, which cannot be accounted for by us. *His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters.* We know he doth all wisely and well, but what he doth we know not now, it is time enough to know hereafter.

(2.) The extensive care and beneficence of the divine providence. *Thou preservest man and beast*, not only protectest them from mischief, but suppliest them with that which is needful for the support of life. The beasts, tho' not capable of knowing and praising God, yet are graciously provided for; their eyes wait on him, and he giveth them their meat in due season.

Let

Let us not wonder that God gives food to bad men, for he feeds the brute creatures; and let us not fear but that he will provide well for good men; he that feeds the young lions will not starve his own children.

(3.) The peculiar favour of God to the saints. Observe (1.) their character, *ver. 7.* They are such as are allured by the excellency of God's loving kindness, to put their trust under the shadow of his wings. (1.) God's loving kindness is precious to them; they relish it, they taste a transcendent sweetness in it, they admire God's beauty and benignity above any thing in this world, nothing so amiable, so desirable. Those know not God, that do not admire his loving kindness, and those know not themselves, that do not earnestly covet it. (2.) They therefore repose an entire confidence in him; they have recourse to him, put themselves under his protection, and then think themselves safe, and find themselves easy, as the chickens under the wings of the hen, *Matth. xxiii. 37.* It was the character of proselytes, that they came to trust under the wings of the God of Israel, *Ruth ii. 12.* and what more proper to gather proselytes than the excellency of his loving kindness? What more powerful to engage our complacency to him and on him? Those that are thus drawn by love will cleave to him.

2. Their privilege; happy, thrice happy, the people whose God is the Lord, for in him they have, or may have, or shall have, a compleat happiness.

1. Their desires shall be answered, *ver. 8.* They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; their wants supplied, their cravings gratified, and their capacities filled; in God all-sufficient they shall have enough; all that which an enlightened, enlarged, soul can desire or receive. The gains of the world, and the delights of sense, will surfeit, but never satisfy, *Isa. lv. 2.* But the communications of divine favour and grace, will satisfy, but never surfeit. A gracious soul, tho' still desiring more of God, never desires more than God. The gifts of providence so far satisfy them, that are content with such things as they have; *I have all, and abound, Phil. iv. 18.* The benefit of holy ordinances is the fatness of God's house, sweet to a sanctified soul, and strengthening to the spiritual and divine life, with this they are abundantly satisfied; they desire nothing more in this world than to live a life of communion with God; and to have the comfort of the promises. But the full, the abundant, satisfaction is reserved for the future state, the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. Every vessel will be full there.

2. Their joys shall be constant. Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. There are pleasures that are truly divine; they are thy pleasures; not only which come from thee as the giver of them, but which terminate in thee as the matter and centre of them, which being purely spiritual, are of the same nature with those of the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, and bear some analogy, even to the delights of the eternal mind. There is a river of these pleasures, always full, always fresh, always flowing. There is enough for all, enough for each, see *Pfal. xlv. 4.* The pleasures of sense are stinking puddle water, those of faith are pure and pleasant, *clear as crystal, Rev. xxii. 1.* God has not only provided this river of pleasures for his people, but he makes them to drink of it; works in them a gracious appetite to these pleasures, and by his Spirit fills their souls with joy and peace in believing. In heaven they shall be for ever drinking of those pleasures that are at God's right hand, satiated with a fulness of joy, *Pfal. xvi. 11.*

3. Life and light shall be their everlasting bliss and portion, *ver. 9.* Having God himself for their felicity, (1.) In him they have a fountain of life, from which those rivers of pleasure flow, *ver. 8.* The God of nature is the fountain of natural life; in him we live and move, and have our being, the God of grace is the fountain of spiritual life: All the strength and comfort of a sanctified soul; all its gracious principles, powers, and performances, are from God, all its sensations of divine things, and all its motions towards them, he is the spring and author of them all; he quickeneth whom he will, and whosoever will, may come and take from him of the waters of life freely. He is the fountain of eternal life, the happiness of glorified saints consists in the vision and fruition of him, and in the immediate communications of his love without interruption or fear of cessation.

(2.) In him they have light in perfection, wisdom and knowledge, and joy; all included in this light. *In thy light we shall see light, i. e.* (1.) In the knowledge of thee in grace, and the vision of thee in glory; we shall have that which will abundantly suit and satisfy our understandings; that divine light which shines in the scripture, and especially in the face of Christ, the light of the world, has all truth in it. When we come to see God face to face, within the veil, we shall see light in perfection, we shall know enough then, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* *1 John iii. 2.* (2.) In communion with thee now; by the communications of thy grace to us, and the return of our devout affections to thee, and in the fruition of thee shortly in heaven, we shall have a compleat felicity and satisfaction. In thy favour we have all the good we can desire. This is a dark world, we see little comfort in it, but in the heavenly light there is true light, and no false light; light that is lasting, and never wastes. In this world we see God, and enjoy him by creatures and means, but

in heaven God himself shall be with us, *Rev. xxi. 3.* and we shall see and enjoy him immediately.

2. We have here David's prayers, intercessions, and holy triumphs, grounded upon these meditations.

1. He interceeds for all saints, begging that they may always experience the benefit and comfort of God's favour and grace, *ver. 10.* (1.) The persons he prays for, are those that know God, that are acquainted with him, acknowledge him, and avouch him for theirs; and the upright in heart, that are sincere in their profession of religion, and faithful both to God and man: Those that are not upright with God, do not know him as they should. (2.) The blessing he begs for them is God's loving kindness, *i. e.* the tokens of his favour towards them, and his righteousness, *i. e.* the workings of his grace in them; or his loving kindness and righteousness is his goodness, according to promise, it is mercy and truth. (3.) The manner in which he desires this blessing may be conveyed is, *O continue it, draw it out,* as the mother draws out her breasts to the child, and then the child draws out the milk from the breasts. Let it be drawn out to a length equal to the line of eternity itself; the happiness of the saints in heaven will be in perfection, and yet in continual progression, as some think; for the fountain there will be always full, and the streams always flowing. *In these is continuance, Isa. lxiv. 5.*

2. He prays for himself, that he might be preserved in his integrity and comfort, *ver. 11.* *Let not the foot of pride come against me,* to trip up my heels or trample upon me, and let not the hand of the wicked, which is stretched out against me, prevail to remove me, either from my purity and integrity, by any temptation, or from my peace and comfort, by any trouble. Let not those that fight against God triumph over those who desire to cleave to him. They that have experienced the pleasure of communion with God, cannot but desire that nothing may ever remove them from him.

3. He rejoiceth in hope of the downfall of all his enemies in due time, *ver. 12.* There where they thought to have gained the point against me, they are themselves fallen; taken in that snare which they laid for me. There, in the other world, (so some) there where the saints stand in the judgment, and have a place in God's house, the workers of iniquity are cast in the judgment, are cast down into hell, into the bottomless pit, out of which for certain they shall never be able to rise, from under the insupportable weight of God's wrath and curse. It is true we are not to rejoice, when any particular enemy of ours falls, but the final overthrow of all the workers of iniquity, will be the everlasting triumph of glorified saints.

P S A L M XXXVII.

This psalm is a sermon, and an excellent useful sermon it is; calculated not (as most of the psalms) for our devotion, but for our conversation; there is nothing in it of prayer or praise, but it is all instruction; it is *Maschil*, a teaching psalm, it is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of providence, the advancement of the wicked, and the disgrace of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, and an exhortation to carry ourselves as becomes us, under such dark dispensations. The work of the prophets (and David was one) was to explain the law: Now the law of Moses had promised temporal blessings to the obedient, and denounced temporal miseries against the disobedient, which principally referred to the body of the people, the nation as a nation, for when they came to be applied to particular persons, many instances occurred of sinners in prosperity, and saints in adversity; to reconcile those instances with the word that God had spoken, is the scope of the prophet in this psalm. In which (1.) He forbids us to fret at the prosperity of the wicked in their wicked ways, *ver. 1. 7, 8.* (2.) He gives very good reasons why we should not fret at it. (1.) Because of the scandalous character of the wicked, *ver. 12, 14, 21, 32.* notwithstanding their prosperity; and the honourable character of the righteous, *ver. 21, 26, 30, 31.* (2.) Because of the destruction and ruin, which the wicked are nigh to, *ver. 2, 9, 10, 20, 35, 36, 38.* and the salvation and protection which the righteous are sure of, from all the malicious designs of the wicked, *ver. 13, 15, 17, 28, 33, 39, 40.* (3.) Because of the particular mercy God has in store for all good people, and the favour he shews them, *ver. 11, 16, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 37.* (3.) He prescribes very good remedies against this sin of envying the prosperity of the wicked, and great encouragement to use those remedies, *ver. 3, 4, 5, 6, 27, 34.* In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish one another rightly to understand the providence of God, and to accommodate ourselves to it; at all times carefully to do our duty, and then patiently to leave the event with God, and to believe that how black soever things may look for the present, it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him.

¶ A psalm of David.

FRET not thy self because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. 3. Trust in the LORD, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. 4. Delight thy self also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. 5. Commit thy way unto the LORD: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. 6. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.

The instructions here given are very plain, much need not be said for the exposition of them, but there is a deal to be done for the reducing of them to practice, and there they will look best.

1. We are here cautioned against discontent at the prosperity and success of evil doers, *ver. 1, 2. Fret not thy self, neither be thou envious.* We may suppose, that David speaks this to himself first, and preaches it to his own heart, in his communing with that upon his bed, for the suppressing of those corrupt passions which he found working there, and then leaves it in writing, for instruction to others that might be in the like temptation. That is preached best, and with most probability of success to others, which is first preached to ourselves. Now, (1.) When we look abroad, we see the world full of evil doers, and workers of iniquity, that flourish and prosper, that have what they will, and do what they will, that live in ease and pomp themselves, and have power in their hands to do mischief to those about them. So it was in David's time, and therefore if it is so still, let us not marvel at the matter, as tho' it were some new or strange thing. (2.) When we look within, we find ourselves in temptation to fret at this, and to be envious against these scandals and burthens, these blemishes and common nuisances of this earth. We are apt to fret at God, as if he were unkind to the world, and unkind to his church, in permitting such men to live and prosper, and prevail as they do. We are apt to fret ourselves with vexation at their success in their evil projects; we are apt to envy them the liberty they take in getting wealth, and perhaps by unlawful means, and in the indulgence of their lusts, and to wish that we could shake off the restraints of conscience, and do so too. We are tempted to think them the only happy people, and to incline to imitate them, and to join ourselves with them, that we may share in their gains, and eat of their dainties. And this is that which we are warned against: *Fret not thy self, neither be thou envious.* Fretfulness and envy are sins that are their own punishments, they are the uneasiness of the spirit, and the rottenness of the bones, it is therefore in kindness to ourselves that we are warned against it. Yet that is not all, for (3.) When we look forward with an eye of faith, we shall see no reason to envy wicked people their prosperity, for their ruin is at the door, and they are ripening apace for it, *ver. 2.* They flourish but as the grass, and as the green herb, which no body envies or frets at. The flourishing of a godly man is like that of a fruitful tree, *Psal. i. 3.* but that of the wicked man like grass and herbs, which are very short-lived. (1.) They will soon wither of themselves. Outward prosperity is a fading thing, and so is the life itself, to which it is confined. (2.) They will sooner be cut down by the judgments of God. Their triumphing is short, but their weeping and wailing will be everlasting.

2. We are here counselled to live a life of confidence and complacency in God, and that will keep us from fretting at the prosperity of evil doers; if we do well for our own souls, we shall see little reason to envy those that do so ill for theirs.

Here are three excellent precepts which we are to be ruled by, and to enforce them, three precious promises, which we may rely upon.

1. We must make God our hope in the way of duty, and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in this world, *ver. 3.* (1.) It is required that we trust in the Lord, and do good, that we confide in God, and conform to him. The life of religion lies much in a believing reliance on God, his favour, his providence, his promise, his grace, and a diligent care to serve him and our generation, according to his will. We must not think to trust in God, and then live as we list; no, it is not trusting God, but tempting him, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him; nor must we think to do good, and then to trust to ourselves, and our own righteousness and strength; no, we must both trust in the Lord, and do good. And then (2.) It is promised that we shall be well provided for in this world. So *thou shalt dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed*; he doth not say, so shalt thou get preferment, dwell in a palace, and be feasted, what needs that? a man's life consists not in the abundance of these things; but thou shalt have a place to live in, and that in the land, in Canaan, the valley of vision, and thou shalt

No. XLI.

have food convenient for thee, and this is more than we deserve, it is as much as a good man will indent for; *Gen. xxviii. 20.* And it is enough for one that is going to heaven. Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance: *Verily thou shalt be fed*, (some read it) Thou shalt be fed by faith, as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding upon the promises. *Verily thou shalt be fed*, as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee. God himself is a shepherd, a feeder to all those that trust in him, *Psal. xxiii. 1.*

2. We must make God our hearts delight, and then we shall have our hearts desire, *ver. 4.* we must not only depend upon God, but solace ourselves in him. We must be well pleased that there is a God, that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be, and that he is our God in covenant. We must delight ourselves in his beauty, bounty, and benignity, our souls must return to him, and repose in him as their rest, and their portion for ever. Being satisfied of his loving-kindness, we must be satisfied with it, and make that our exceeding joy, *Psal. xliii. 4.* We were commanded, *ver. 3.* to do good, and then follows this command, to delight in God, which is as much a privilege as a duty. If we make conscience of obedience to God, we may then take the comfort of a complacency in him. And even this pleasant duty of delighting in God, has a promise annexed to it, which is very full and precious, enough to recompense the hardest services, *He shall give thee the desires of thy heart.* He has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body, and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul; what is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this; to know and love, and live to God, to please him, and to be pleased in him.

3. We must make God our guide, and submit in every thing to his conduct and dispose, and then all our affairs, even those that seem most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well, and to our satisfaction, *ver. 5, 6.*

(1.) The duty is very easy, and if we do it aright, it will make us easy. *Commit thy way unto the Lord; roll thy way upon the Lord*, so the margin reads it, *Prov. xvi. 3. Psal. lv. 22. Cast thy burthen upon the Lord, i. e.* the burthen of thy care, *1 Pet. v. 7.* We must roll it off ourselves, so as not to afflict and perplex ourselves with thoughts about future events, *Matt. vi. 25.* not to cumber and trouble ourselves either with contrivance of the means, or with expectation of the end, but refer it to God, leave it to him, by his wise and good providence to order and dispose of all our concerns as he pleaseth; *Reveal thy way unto the Lord*; (so the LXX.) *i. e.* by prayer spread thy case, and all thy cares about it, before the Lord, as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, *Judg. xi. 11.* and then trust in him to bring it to a good issue, with a full satisfaction that all is well that God doth. We must do our duty, that must be our care, and then leave the event with God, *Sit still, and see how the matter will fall*, *Ruth iii. 18.* We must follow providence, and not force it; subscribe to infinite wisdom, and not prescribe.

(2.) The promise is very sweet: (1.) In general, he shall bring that to pass, whatever it is which thou hast committed to him, if not to thy contrivance, yet to thy content. He will find means to extricate thee out of thy straits, to prevent thy fears, and bring about thy purposes to thy satisfaction. (2.) In particular, he will take care of thy reputation, and bring thee out of thy difficulties, not only with comfort, but with credit and honour. *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment*, *ver. 6. i. e.* He shall make it to appear, that thou art an honest man, and that is honour enough. (1.) It is implied, that the righteousness and judgment of good people may for a time be clouded and eclipsed, either by remarkable rebukes of providence; Job's great afflictions darkened his righteousness; or by the malicious censures and reproaches of men, who put them under ill characters, which they no way deserve, and lay to their charge things which they know not. (2.) It is promised that God will in due time roll away the reproach they are under, clear up their innocence, and bring forth their righteousness to their honour; perhaps in this world, at furthest in the great day, *Matt. xiii. 43.* Note, If we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God, to take care of our good name.

7. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thy self because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. 8. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thy self in any wise to do evil. 9. For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. 10. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. 11. But the meek shall inherit the earth: and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

12. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. 13. The LORD shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming. 14. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. 15. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. 16. A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. 17. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous. 18. The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. 19. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. 20. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall consume: into smoke shall they consume away.

In these verses we have,

1. The foregoing precepts inculcated; for we are so apt to disquiet ourselves with needles, fruitless, discontents and distrusts, that it is necessary there should be precept upon precept, and line upon line, to suppress them, and arm us against them.

(1.) Let us compose ourselves by believing in God, *rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him*, ver. 7. *i. e.* be well reconciled to all he doth, and acquiesce in it, for that is best that is, because it is what God has appointed; and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, tho' we know not how or which way. Be silent to the Lord, so the word is; not with a sullen, but a submissive, silence. A patient bearing what is laid upon us, and a patient expectation of what is further appointed for us, is as much our interest as it is our duty, for it will make us always easy, and there is a great deal of reason for it; for it is making a virtue of necessity.

(2.) Let us not discompose ourselves at what we see in this world. *Fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his wicked way*; that tho' he is an ill man, yet thrives, and grows rich and great in the world; no nor because of him who doth mischief with his power and wealth, and brings wicked devices to pass, against those that are virtuous and good, who seems to have gained his point, and to have run them down; if thy heart begins to rise at it, stroke down thy folly, and *cease from anger*, ver. 8. check the first stirrings of discontent and envy, and do not harbour any hard thoughts of God and his providence upon this account; be not angry at any thing that God doth, but forsake that wrath; it is the worst kind of wrath that can be. *Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil*, *i. e.* do not envy them their prosperity, lest thou be tempted to fall in with them, and to take the same evil course that they take to enrich and advance themselves, or some desperate course to avoid them and their power. Note, A fretful, discontented spirit lies open to many temptations, and those that indulge it, are in danger of doing evil.

2. The foregoing reasons taken from the approaching ruin of the wicked, notwithstanding their prosperity, and the real happiness of the righteous, notwithstanding their troubles, are here much enlarged upon, and the same things repeated in a pleasing variety of expression.

We were cautioned, ver. 7. not to envy the wicked, either worldly prosperity, or the success of their plots against the righteous. And the reasons here given respect these two temptations severally.

1. Good people have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of wicked people, nor to grieve or be uneasy at it.

(1.) Because the prosperity of the wicked will soon be at an end; ver. 9. *Evil doers shall be cut off*, by some sudden stroke of divine justice, in the midst of their prosperity; what they have got by sin will not only flow away from them, *Job xx. 28.* but they shall be carried away with it. See the end of these men, *Psal. lxxiii. 17.* how dear their ill-got gain will cost them, and you will be far from envying them, or from being willing to espouse their lot, for better, for worse. Their ruin is sure, and it is very near, ver. 10. *Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be* what they now are, they are brought into desolation in a moment, *Psal. lxxiii. 19.* Have a little patience, for the Judge stands before the door, *Jam. v. 8, 9.* Moderate your passion for the Lord is at hand, *Phil. iv. 5.* And when it comes it will be an utter ruin, he and his shall be extirpated, the day that comes shall leave him neither root nor branch, *Mal. iv. 1.* thou shalt diligently consider his place, where but the other day he made a mighty figure, but it shall not be, you will not find it; he shall leave nothing valuable, nothing honourable, behind him. To the same purpose, ver. 20. *The wicked shall perish*, their death is their perdition, because it is the period of all their joy, and a passage to endless misery: *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*, but undone, for ever undone, are the dead that die in their sins. The wicked are the enemies of the Lord, so they make themselves,

who will not have him to reign over them, and as such he will reckon with them; *they shall consume as the fat of lambs, they shall consume into smoke.* Their prosperity, which gratifies their sensuality, is like the fat of lambs, not solid or substantial, but loose and watery; and when their ruin comes, they shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God, and be consumed as the fat of the sacrifices was upon the altar, whence it ascended in smoke. The day of God's vengeance on the wicked is represented as a sacrifice of the fat of the kidneys of rams, *Isa. xxxiv. 6.* for he will be honoured by the ruin of his enemies, as he was by the sacrifices; damned sinners are sacrifices, *Mark ix. 49.* This is a good reason why we should not envy them their prosperity, while they are fed to the full, they are but in the fattening for the day of sacrifice, *like a lamb in a large place*, *Hos. iv. 16.* and the more they prosper, the more will God be glorified in their ruin.

(2.) Because the condition of the righteous, even in this life, is every way better and more desirable than that of the wicked, ver. 16. In general, *a little that a righteous man has* of the honour, wealth, and pleasure, of this world, *is better than the riches of many wicked.* Observe, (1.) The wealth of the world is so dispensed by the divine providence, that it is often the lot of good people to have but a little of it, and of wicked people to have abundance of it; for thus God would shew us that the things of this world are not the best things, for if they were, those would have most that are best and dearest to God. (2.) That a godly man's little is really better than a wicked man's much, see *Prov. xv. 16, 17.*—*xvi. 8.*—*xxviii. 6.* A godly man's estate, tho' never so little, is better than a wicked man's estate, tho' never so much, for it comes from a better hand, from a hand of special love, and not merely from a hand of common providence; it is enjoyed by a better title, God gives it to them by a promise, *Gal. iii. 18.* it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the heir of all things; and it is put to a better use, it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God; *unto the pure all things are pure*, *Tit. i. 15.* A little wherewith God is served and honoured, is better than a great deal prepared for Baal, or for a base lust.

The promises here made to the righteous secure them such a happiness as that they need not envy the prosperity of evil doers. Let them know to their comfort,

1. That they shall inherit the earth, *i. e.* as much of it as infinite wisdom sees good for them; they have the promises of the life that now is, *1 Tim. iv. 8.* If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it. All is theirs, even the world, and things present, as well as things to come, *1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.* They have it by inheritance, a safe and honourable title, not by permission only, and connivance, when evil doers are cut off, the righteous sometimes inherit what they gathered; *the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, *Job xxvii. 17.* This promise is here made, (1.) To those that live a life of faith, ver. 9. *Those that wait upon the Lord*, as dependents on him, expectants from him, and supplicants to him, *they shall inherit the earth*, as a token of his present favour to them, and an earnest of better things intended for them in the other world. God is a good master that provides plentifully and well, not only for his working servants, but for his waiting servants. (2.) To those that live a quiet and peaceable life, ver. 11. *The meek shall inherit the earth.* They are in least danger of being injured and disturbed in the possession of what they have; and they have most satisfaction in themselves, and consequently the sweetest relish of their creature-comforts. Our Saviour has made this a gospel promise, and a confirmation of the blessing he pronounced on the meek, *Matt. v. 5.*

2. That they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace, ver. 11. Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in, but they have that which is better, abundance of peace, inward peace and tranquillity of mind, peace with God, and then peace in God, that great peace which they have that love God's law, whom *nothing shall offend*, *Psal. cxix. 165.* That abundance of peace which is in the kingdom of Christ, *Psal. lxxii. 7.* That peace which the world cannot give, *John xiv. 27.* and which the wicked cannot have, *Isa. lvii. 21.* This they shall delight themselves in, and in it they shall have a continual feast, while they that have abundance of wealth, do but cumber and perplex themselves with it, and have little delight in it.

3. That God knows their days, ver. 18. He takes particular notice of them, of all they do, and of all that happens to them. He keeps account of the days of their service, and not one day's work shall go unrewarded; and of the day of their suffering, that for those also they may receive a recompence. He knows their fair days, and hath pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and as the day is, so shall the strength be.

4. That their inheritance shall be for ever. Their time on earth is reckoned by days, which will soon be numbed, God takes cognizance of them, and gives them the blessings of every day in its day, but it was never intended that their inheritance should be confined within the limits of those days, no, that must be the portion of an immortal soul, and therefore must last as

as long as that lasts, and will run parallel with the longest line of eternity itself, *their inheritance shall be for ever*, not their inheritance in the earth, but that incorruptible, indefeasible one, which is laid up for them in heaven. They that are sure of an everlasting inheritance in the other world, have no reason to envy the wicked their transitory possessions and pleasures in this world.

5. That in the worst of times it shall go well with them, *ver. 19. They shall not be ashamed of their hope and confidence in God*, nor of the profession they have made of religion, for the comfort of that will stand them in stead, and be a real support to them in evil times. When others droop, they shall lift up their heads with joy and confidence; even in the days of famine, when others are dying for hunger round about them, they shall be satisfied, as Elijah was, some way or other God will provide food convenient for them, or give them hearts to be satisfied and content without it; so that if they should be hardly bestead and hungry, they shall not (as the wicked do) *fret themselves, and curse their king and their God*, Isa. viii. 21. but rejoice in God as the God of their salvation, even when *the fig-tree doth not blossom*, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

2. Good people have no reason to fret at the success of the designs of the wicked against the just in some measure and degree; suppose they do bring some of their wicked devices to pass, which makes us fear they will gain their point, and bring them all to pass, yet let us cease from anger, and not fret ourselves, so as to think of giving up the cause. For,

1. Their plots will be their shame, *ver. 12, 13. It is true, the wicked plotteth against the just*, there is a rooted enmity in the seed of the wicked one against the righteous seed, their aim is, if they can, to destroy their righteousness, if that fail, then to destroy them. To this end, they have acted with a great deal both of cursed policy and contrivance; they plot, they practise against the just; and of cursed zeal and fury, *they gnash upon them with their teeth*, so desirous are they, if they could get it into their power, to eat them up; and so full of rage and indignation are they, because it is not in their power; but by all this they do but make themselves ridiculous, *the Lord shall laugh at them*, Psal. ii. 4, 5. They are proud and insolent, but God shall pour contempt upon them, he is not only displeased with them, but he despiseth them and all their attempts, as vain and ineffectual, and their malice as impotent and in a chain; for *he sees that his day is coming*, that is, (1.) The day of God's reckoning, the day of the revelation of his righteousness, which now seems clouded and eclipsed. Men have their day now, *this is your hour*, Luke xxii. 53. But God will have his day shortly, a day of recompences, a day which will set all to rights, and render that ridiculous which now passeth for glorious. *It is a small thing to be judged of mens day*, 1 Cor. iv. 3. God's day will give a decisive judgment. (2.) The day of their ruin, the wicked man's day, the day set for his fall, that day is coming which notes delay, it is not yet come, but certainly it will come. The believing prospect of that day will enable the virgin, the daughter of Sion, to despise the rage of her enemies, and *laugh them to scorn*, Isa. xxxvii. 22.

2. Their attempts will be their destruction, *ver. 14, 15. See here, (1.) How barbarous they are in their designs against good people. They prepare instruments of death, the sword and the bow, no less will serve, they hunt for the precious life, that which they design, is to cast down and slay, it is the blood of the saints they thirst after: They carry on the design very far, and it is near to be put in execution; they have drawn the sword and bent the bow; and all these military preparations are made against the helpless, the poor and needy, which speak them very cowardly, and against the guiltless, such as be of upright conversation, that never gave them any provocation, nor offered injury to them, or any other person, which speaks them very wicked: Uprightness, itself, will be no fence against their malice. But, (2.) How justly their malice recoils upon themselves, *their sword shall turn into their own heart*; which implies the preservation of the righteous from their malice, and the filling up of the measure of their own iniquity by it. Sometimes that very thing proves to be their own destruction which they projected against their harmless neighbours; however, God's sword, which their provocations have drawn against themselves, will give them their death's wound.*

3. Those that are not suddenly cut off, yet shall be so disabled to do any farther mischief, that the interests of the church shall be effectually secured. *Their bows shall be broken*, *ver. 15. the instruments of their cruelty shall fail them, and they shall lose those whom they had made tools of, to serve their bloody purposes with; nay, their arms shall be broken, so that they shall not be able to go on with their enterprizes. But the Lord upholdeth the righteous*, so that they neither sink under the weight of their afflictions, nor are run down by the violence of their enemies. He upholdeth them both in their integrity, and in their prosperity; and they that are so upheld by the Rock of ages, have no reason to envy the wicked the support of their broken reeds.

21. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. 22. For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and *they that be* cursed of him, shall be cut off. 23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. 24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. 25. I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. 26. *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth: and his seed is blessed. 27. Depart from evil, and do good: and dwell for evermore. 28. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints, they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. 29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. 30. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom; and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31. The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. 32. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. 33. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

These verses are much to the same purpose with the foregoing verses of this psalm, for it is a subject worthy to be dwelt upon. Observe here,

1. What is required of us, as the way to our happiness; which we may learn both from the characters here laid down, and the directions here given. If we would be blessed of God,

(1.) We must make conscience of giving every body their own, for *the wicked borroweth, and payeth not again*, *ver. 21.* It is the first thing which the Lord our God requires of us, that we do justly, and render to all their due. It is not only a shameful paltry thing, but a sinful wicked thing, not to repay what we have borrowed. Some make this an instance, not so much of the wickedness of the wicked, as of the misery and poverty to which they are reduced by the just judgment of God, that they shall be necessitated to borrow for their supply, and then be in no capacity to repay again, and so lie at the mercy of their creditors. And whatever some men seem to think of it, as it is a great sin for those that are able, to deny the payment of their just debts, so it is a great misery not to be able to pay them.

(2.) We must be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence: For as it is an instance of God's goodness to the righteous, that he puts it into the power of his hand to be kind, and to do good (and so some understand it, God's blessing increaseth his little to that degree, that he has abundance to spare for the relief of others) so it is an instance of the goodness of the righteous man, that he has a heart proportionable to his estate; *he sheweth mercy and giveth*, *ver. 21. He is ever merciful*, or every day, or all the day merciful, and lendeth, and sometimes there is as true charity in lending as in giving; and giving and lending are then acceptable to God, when they come from a merciful disposition in the heart, which if it be sincere, will be constant, and will keep us from being weary of well-doing: He that is truly merciful will be ever merciful.

(3.) We must leave our sins, and engage in the practice of serious godliness, *ver. 27. Depart from evil and do good*; cease to do evil and abhor it; learn to do well, and cleave to it. This is true religion.

(4.) We must abound in good discourse, and with our tongues must glorify God and edify others. That is part of the character of a righteous man, *ver. 30. That his mouth speaketh wisdom*, not only he speaks wisely, but he speaks wisdom, like Solomon himself, for the instruction of those about him; his tongue talketh not of things idle and impertinent; but of judgment, *i. e.* of the word and providence of God, and the rules of wisdom for the right ordering of the conversation. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak that which is good, and to the use of edifying.

(5.) We must have our wills brought into an entire subjection to the will and word of God, *ver. 31. The law of God, of his God, is in his heart*; and in vain do we pretend that God is our God, if we do not receive his law into our hearts, and resign ourselves to the government of it. It is but a jest and a mockery to speak wisdom, and to talk of judgment, *ver. 30. unless we have the law in our hearts, and we think as we speak. The law of God must be a commanding, ruling, principle in the heart; it must be a light there, a spring there, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform, none of his steps will slide*, it will effectually prevent backsliding into sin, and the uneasiness that follows from it.

2. What is assured to us as instances of our happiness and comfort upon these conditions,

1. That we should have the blessing of God, and that blessing shall be the spring, and sweetness, and security, of all our temporal comforts and enjoyments, *ver. 22. Such as be blessed of God*, as all the righteous are, with a father's blessing, by virtue of that shall inherit the earth, or the land, for so the same word is translated, *ver. 29. the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands.* Our creature-comforts are then comforts indeed to us, when we see them flowing from the blessing of God, from his favour, his promise, and his covenant with us; and if we are sure of the blessing of God, we are sure not to want any thing that is good for us in this world. *The earth shall yield us her increase*, if God, as *our own God*, give us his blessing, *Psal. lxxvii. 6.* And as *those whom God blessed, are thus blessed indeed, for they shall inherit the land, so those whom he curseth, are cursed indeed, and they shall be cut off, and rooted out.* And their extirpation by the divine curse will set off the establishment of the righteous by the divine blessing, and be a foil to it.

2. That God will direct and dispose of our actions and affairs, so as may be most for his glory, *ver. 23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord*; by his grace and holy Spirit he directs the thoughts, affections, and designs, of good men; he has all hearts in his hand, but theirs by their own consent; by his providence he over-rules the events that are concerning them, so as to make their way plain before them, both what they should do, and what they may expect. Observe, God orders the steps of a good man, not only his way in general by his written word, but his particular steps by the whispers of conscience, saying, *This is the way, walk in it.* He doth not always shew him his way at a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and so keeps him in a continual dependence upon his conduct. And this, (1.) Because he delighteth in his way, and is well-pleased with the paths of righteousness wherein he walks. *The Lord knows the way of the righteous*, *Psal. i. 6.* knows it with favour, and therefore directs it, (2.) That he may delight in his way. Because God orders his way according to his own will, therefore he delights in it; for as he loves his own image upon us, so he is well-pleased with what we do under his conduct.

3. That God will keep us from being ruined by our falls, either into sin, or into trouble, *ver. 24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down.* (1.) It is possible a good man may be overtaken in a fault, but the grace of God shall recover him to repentance, so that he shall not be utterly cast down. Tho' he may for a time lose the joys of God's salvation, yet they shall be restored to him; for God shall uphold him with his hand, uphold him with his free spirit. The root shall be kept alive, tho' the leaf wither, and there will come a spring after the winter. (2.) It is possible a good man may be in distress, his affairs embarrassed, his spirits sunk, but he shall not be utterly cast down, God will be the strength of his heart, when his flesh and heart fail, and will uphold him with his comforts, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

4. That we shall not want the necessary supports of this life, *ver. 25. I have been young, and now am old*, and of all the changes I have seen in mens outward condition, and the observations, I have made upon them, I never saw the righteous forsaken of God and man, as I have sometimes seen wicked people abandoned both by heaven and earth, nor do I ever remember to have seen the seed of the righteous reduced to that extremity as to beg their bread. David had himself begged his bread of Ahimelech the priest, but it was when Saul hunted him; and our Saviour has taught us to except the case of persecution for righteousness sake out of all the temporal promises, *Mark x. 30.* because that has such peculiar honours and comforts attending it, as make it rather a gift (as the apostle reckons it, *Phil. i. 29.*) than a loss, or grievance. But there are very few instances of good men, or their families, that are reduced to such extreme poverty as many wicked people bring themselves to by their wickedness. He had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread forsaken; so some expound it. If they do want, God will raise them up friends to supply them, without a scandalous exposing of themselves to the reproach of common beggars; or if they go from door to door for meat, it shall not be with despair, as the wicked man *that wanders abroad for bread, saying, where is it?* *Job xv. 23.* Nor shall he be denied as the prodigal, that *would fain have filled his belly, but no man gave unto him*, *Luke xv. 16.* Nor shall he grudge if he be not satisfied, as David's enemies when they *wandred up and down for meat*, *Psal. lix. 15.* Some make this promise relate especially to those that are charitable and liberal to the poor, and to intimate that David never observed any that brought themselves to poverty by their charity, but it is *withholding more than is meet that tendeth to poverty*, *Prov. xi. 24.*

5. That God will not desert us, but graciously protect us in our difficulties and straits, *ver. 28. The Lord loveth judgment*, i. e. he delights in doing justice himself, and he delights in those that do justice, and therefore he forsaketh not his saints in affliction, when they make themselves strange to them, and become shy of them; but he takes care that they be preserved for ever, i. e. that the saints in every age be taken under his protection, that the succession be preserved to the end of time; and that particular

saints be preserved from all the temptations, and through all the trials of this present time, to that happiness which shall be for ever. He will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, that is a preservation for ever, *2 Tim. iv. 18. Psal. xii. 7.*

6. That we shall have a comfortable settlement in this world, and in a better when we leave this. That we shall dwell for evermore, *ver. 27.* and not be cut off, as the seed of the wicked, *ver. 28.* That we shall inherit the land which the Lord our God gives us, and dwell therein for ever, *ver. 29.* They shall not be tossed that make God their rest, and are at home in him. But on this earth there is no dwelling for ever, no continuing city, it is in heaven only, that city which hath foundations, that the righteous shall dwell for ever; that will be their everlasting habitation.

7. That we shall not become a prey to our adversaries, that seek our ruin, *ver. 32, 33.* There is an adversary that takes all opportunities to do us a mischief, a wicked one that watcheth the righteous (as a roaring lion watcheth his prey) and seeketh to slay him; there are wicked men that do so, that are very subtle; they watch the righteous, that they may have an opportunity to do them a mischief effectually, and may have a pretence wherewith to justify themselves in the doing of it, and very spiteful, for they seek to slay him; but it may very well be applied to the wicked one, the devil, that old serpent who has his wiles to entrap the righteous, his devices which we should not be ignorant of; that great red dragon that seeks to slay them; that roaring lion that goes about continually, restless and raging, and seeking whom he may devour. But it is here promised that he shall not prevail, neither Satan nor his instruments; (1.) He shall not prevail as a field adversary; *The Lord will not leave him in his hand*, he will not permit Satan to do what he would, nor will he withdraw his strength and grace from his people, but will enable them to resist and overcome him, and *their faith shall not fail*, *Luke xxii. 31, 32.* A good man may fall into the hands of a messenger of Satan, and be sorely buffered, but God will not leave him in his hands, *1 Cor. x. 13.* (2.) He shall not prevail as a law adversary; *God will not condemn him when he is judged*, tho' urged to do it by the accuser of the brethren, that *accuseth them before our God day and night.* His false accusations will be thrown out, as those exhibited against Joshua, *Zech. iii. 1, 2. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. It is God that justifieth*, and then *who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?*

34. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. 35. I have seen the wicked in great power: and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. 36. Yet he passeth away, and lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. 37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. 38. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off. 39. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD, he is their strength in the time of trouble. 40. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them because they trust in him.

The psalmist's conclusion of this sermon (for that is the nature of this poem) is of the same purport with the whole, and inculcates the same things.

1. The duty here pressed upon us, is still the same, *ver. 34. Wait on the Lord, and keep his way*, i. e. duty is ours, and we must mind it, and make conscience of it, keep God's way, and never turn out of it, nor loiter in it, keep close, keep going: but events are God's, and we must refer ourselves to him for the disposal of them; we must wait on the Lord, attend the motions of his providence, carefully observe them, and conscientiously accommodate ourselves to them. If we make conscience of keeping God's way, we may with cheerfulness wait on him, and commit to him our way; and we shall find him a good master both to his working servants, and to his waiting servants.

2. The reasons to enforce this duty are much the same too, taken from the certain destruction of the wicked, and the certain salvation of the righteous. This good man being tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, that he might fortify himself against the temptation, goes into the sanctuary of God, and leads us thither, (*Psal. lxxiii. 17.*) there he understands their end, and thence gives us to understand it, and by comparing that with the end of the righteous, baffles the temptation, and puts it to silence. Observe,

1. The misery of the wicked at last, however they may prosper a while. *The end of the wicked shall be cut off*, *ver. 38.* And that cannot be well, that will undoubtedly end so ill. The wicked in their end will be cut off from all good, and all hopes of it, a final period will be put to all their joys, and they will be for ever separated from the fountain of life to all evil. (1.) Some instances of the remarkable ruin of wicked people David had

had himself observed in this world; that the pomp and prosperity of sinners would not secure them from the judgments of God, when their day was come to fall, *ver. 35, 36. I have seen a wicked man* (the word is singular) suppose Saul, or Ahithophel (for David was an old man when he penned this psalm) *in great power, formidable, (so some render it) the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, carrying all before him with a high hand, and seeming to be firmly fixed, and finely flourishing, spreading himself like a green bay-tree, which produceth all leaves and no fruit; like a native, home-born, Israelite, (so Dr Hammond) likely to take root; But what became of him? Eliphaz long before had learned, when he saw the foolish taking root, to curse his habitation, Job v. 3. And David saw cause for it, for this bay-tree is withered away as soon as the fig-tree Christ cursed, he passed away as a dream, as a shadow, such was he, and all the pomp and power he was so proud of; he was gone in an instant, he was not, I sought him with wonder, but he could not be found. He had acted his part, and then quitted the stage, and there was no miss of him. (2.) The total and final ruin of sinners, of all sinners, will shortly be made as much a spectacle to the faints, as they are now sometimes made a spectacle to the world, ver. 34. When the wicked are cut off (and cut off they certainly will be) thou shalt see it, with awful adorations of the divine justice. The transgressors shall be destroyed together, ver. 38. In this world God singles out here one sinner, and there another, out of many, to be made an example in *terrorem*; but in the day of judgment, there will be a general destruction of all the transgressors, and not one shall escape. They that have sinned together shall be damned together; Bind them in bundles to burn them.*

2. The blessedness of the righteous at last. Let us see what will be the end of God's poor despised people.

1. Preferment. There have been times, the iniquity of which has been such, that mens piety has balked their preferment in this world, and put them quite out of the way of raising estates, but those that keep God's way, may be assured that in due time he will exalt them to inherit the land, ver. 34. he will advance them to a place in the heavenly mansions, to dignity and honour, and true wealth in the New Jerusalem; to inherit that good land, that land of promise, of which Canaan was a type; he will exalt them above all contempt and danger.

2. Peace, ver. 37. Let all people mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, take notice of him to admire him, and imitate him, keep your eye upon him to observe what comes of him, and you will find that the end of that man is peace. Sometimes the latter end of his days proves more comfortable to him than the beginning was; the storms blow over, and he is comforted again after the time that he was afflicted; however, if all his days continue dark and cloudy, perhaps his dying day may prove comfortable to him, and his sun may set bright; or, if it should set under a cloud, yet his future state will be peace, everlasting peace. They that walk in their uprightness while they live, shall enter into peace when they die, *Isa. lvii. 2.* A peaceful death has concluded the troublesome life of many a good man; and all is well that thus ends everlastingly well. Balaam himself wished that his death, and his last end, might be like that of the righteous, *Numb. xxiii. 10.*

3. Salvation, ver. 39, 40. The salvation of the righteous (which may be applied to the great salvation of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, *1 Pet. i. 10.*) that is of the Lord; it will be the Lord's doing; the eternal salvation, that salvation of God, which those shall see that order their conversation aright, *Psal. l. 23.* that is of the Lord too. And he that intends Christ and heaven for them, will be a God all-sufficient to them. He is their strength in time of trouble, to support them under it, and carry them through it; He shall help and deliver them, help them to do their duties, or bear their burthens, and to maintain their spiritual conflicts; help them to bear their troubles well, and get good by them, and in due time shall deliver them out of their troubles. He shall deliver them from the wicked that would run them down, and swallow them up, shall secure them there, where the wicked cease from troubling. He shall save them, not only keep them safe, but make them happy, because they trust in him; not because they have merited it from him, but because they have committed themselves to him, and reposed a confidence in him, and have thereby honoured him.

P S A L M XXXVIII.

This is one of the penitential psalms; it is full of grief and complaint from the beginning to the end: David's sins and his afflictions are the cause of his grief, and the matter of his complaints. It should seem he was now sick, and in pain, which minded him of his sins, and helped to humble him for them; he was at the same time deserted by his friends, and persecuted by his enemies, so that the psalm is calculated for the depth of distress, and a complication of calamities. He complains (1.) of God's displeasure, and of his own sin, which provoked God against him, ver. 1—5. (2.) Of his bodily sickness, ver. 6—10. (3.) Of the unkindness of his friends, ver. 11. (4.) Of the

injuries which his enemies did him, pleading his good carriage towards them, yet confessing his sins against God, ver. 12—20. Lastly, He concludes the psalm with earnest prayers to God, for his gracious presence and help, ver. 21, 22. In singing this psalm, we ought to be much affected with the malignity of sin, and if we have not such troubles as here are described, we know not how soon we may have, and therefore must sing of them by way of preparation, and we know that others have them, and therefore we must sing of them by way of sympathy.

¶ A psalm of David to bring to remembrance.

1. **O** LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thine hand presseth me sore. 3. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. 4. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. 5. My wounds stink and are corrupt: because of my foolishness. 6. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. 7. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. 8. I am feeble and sore broken: I have rored by reason of the disquietness of my heart. 9. LORD, all my desire is before thee: and my groaning is not hid from thee. 10. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. 11. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore: and my kinsmen stand afar off.

The title of this psalm is very observable. It is a psalm to bring to remembrance; the 70th psalm, which was likewise penned in a day of affliction, is so entitled. It is designed (1.) To bring to his own remembrance; we will suppose it penned when he was sick, and in pain, and then it teacheth us that times of sickness are times to bring to remembrance; to bring the sin to remembrance for which God contended with us; to awaken our consciences to deal faithfully and plainly with us, and set our sins in order before us for our humiliation. In a day of adversity consider. Or we may suppose it penned after his recovery, but designed as a record of the convictions he was under, and the workings of his heart when he was in affliction, that upon every review of this psalm he might call to mind the good impressions then made upon him, and make a fresh improvement of them. To the same purpose was the writing of Hezekiah, when he had been sick. (2.) To put others in mind of the same things which he was himself mindful of, and to teach them what to think, and what to say, when they are sick and in affliction, let them think as he did, and speak as he did.

1. He deprecates the wrath of God, and his displeasure, in his affliction, ver. 1. O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. With this same petition he began another prayer, for the visitation of the sick, *Psal. vi. 1.* This was most upon his heart, and should be most upon ours when we are in affliction, that however God rebukes and chastens us, it may not be in wrath and displeasure, for that will be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery. Those that would escape the wrath of God, must pray against that, more than any outward affliction; and be content to bear any outward affliction, while it comes from and consists with the law of God.

2. He bitterly laments the impressions of God's displeasure upon his soul, ver. 2. Thine arrows stick fast in me. Let Job's complaint, *chap. vi. 4.* expound David's here; by the arrows of the Almighty, he means the terrors of God, which did set themselves in array against him. He was under a very melancholy, frightful, apprehension of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and thought he could look for nothing but judgment and fiery indignation to devour him. God's arrows, as they are sure to hit the mark, so they are sure to stick where they hit, to stick fast, till he is pleased to draw them out, and to bind up with his comforts the wound he has made with his terrors. This will be the everlasting misery of the damned, the arrows of God's wrath will stick fast in them, and the wound will be incurable. Thy hand, thy heavy hand, presseth me sore, and I am ready to sink under it; it not only lies hard upon me, but it lies long, and who knows the power of God's anger, the weight of his hand! Sometimes God shot his arrows, and stretched forth his hand for David, *Psal. xviii. 14.* but now against him; so uncertain is the continuance of divine comforts, where yet the continuance of divine grace is assured. He complains of God's wrath, as that which inflicted the bodily distemper he was under, ver. 3. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger. The bitterness of it infused in his mind affected his body; but that was not the worst, it caused the disquietness of his heart, by reason of which he forgot the courage of a soldier, the dignity of a prince, and all the cheerfulness

of the sweet psalmist of Israel, and roared terribly, *ver. 8.* Nothing will disquiet the heart of a good man so much as the sense of God's anger; which shews what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands. The way to keep the heart quiet, is to keep our selves in the love of God, and to do nothing to offend him.

3. He acknowledgeth his sin to be the procuring, provoking, cause of all his troubles, and groans more under the load of guilt than any other load, *ver. 3.* He complains his flesh had no soundness, his bones had no rest, so great a tofs he was in. It is because of thine anger, that kindles the fire which burns so fierce; but in the next words he justifies God herein, and takes all the blame upon himself, it is because of my sin. I have deserved it, and so have brought it upon my self; my own iniquities do correct me. If our trouble be the fruit of God's anger, we may thank our selves, it is our sin that is the cause of it. Are we restless? It is sin that makes us so: If there were not sin in our souls, there would be no pain in our bones, no illness in our bodies.

It is sin therefore that this good man complains most of, (1.) As a burden, a heavy burden, *ver. 4.* *Mine iniquities are gone over my head,* as proud waters over a man that is sinking; and drowning, or as a heavy burden upon my head, pressing me down, more than I am able to bear or to bear up under. Note, Sin is a burden. The power of sin dwelling in us is a weight, *Heb. xii. 1.* all are clogged with it, it keeps men from soaring upwards and pressing forward; all the faints are complaining of it as a body of death they are loaded with, *Rom. vii. 25.* The guilt of sin committed by us is a burden, a heavy burden; it is a burden to God, he is pressed under it, *Amos ii. 13.* a burden to the whole creation, which groans under it, *Rom. viii. 21, 22.* It will first or last be a burden to the sinner himself, either a burden of repentance, when he is pricked to the heart for it, labours and is heavy laden under it; or a burden of ruin, when it sinks him to the lowest hell, and will for ever detain him there; it will be a talent of lead upon him, *Zech. v. 8.* Sinners are said to bear their iniquity. Threatnings are burdens.

(2.) As wounds, dangerous wounds, *ver. 5.* *My wounds stink and are corrupt,* as wounds in the body rankle and fester, and grow foul for want of being dressed and looked after, and it is through my own foolishness. Sins are wounds, *Gen. iv. 23.* painful, mortal wounds: Our wounds by sin are oftentimes in a bad condition, no care taken of them, no application made to them, and it is owing to the sinner's foolishness, in not confessing sin, *Psal. xxxii. 3, 4.* A slight sore neglected, may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin, slighted and left unrepented of.

4. He bemoans himself because of his afflictions, and gives ease to his grief, by giving vent to it, and pouring out his complaint before the Lord.

1. He was troubled in mind, his conscience was pained, and he had no rest in his own spirit; and a wounded spirit who can bear? He was troubled or distorted, bowed down greatly, and *went mourning all the day long*, *ver. 6.* He was always pensive and melancholy, which made him a burden and terror to himself. His spirit was feeble and sore broken, and his heart disquieted, *ver. 8.* Herein David in his sufferings was a type of Christ, who being in his agony, cried out, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful.* This is a sorer affliction than any other in this world; whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, we have no reason to complain, as long as he preserves to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences.

2. He was sick and weak in body; his loins filled with a loathsome disease, some swelling, or ulcer, or inflammation; some think a plague sore; such as Hezekiah's bile, and there was no soundness in his flesh, but, like Job, he was all over disordered. See (1.) What vile bodies these are which we carry about with us; and what grievous diseases they are liable to, and what an offence and grievance they may soon be made by some diseases to the souls that animate them, as they always are a cloud and clog. (2.) That the bodies both of the greatest, and of the best of men, have in them the same seeds of diseases that the bodies of others have, and are liable to the same disasters. David himself, tho' so great a prince, and so great a saint, was not exempt from the most grievous diseases; there was no soundness even in his flesh; probably this was after his sin in the matter of Uriah, and thus did he smart in his flesh, for his fleshly lusts. When at any time we are disordered in our bodies, we ought to remember how God has been dishonoured in, and by our bodies. He was *feeble and sore broken*, *ver. 8.* His heart panted, and was in a continual palpitation, *ver. 10.* His strength and limbs failed him, as for the light of his eyes, that was gone from him, either with much weeping, or by a defluxion of rheum upon them, or through the lowness of his spirits, and the frequent returns of a deliquium.

Note, Sicknes will tame the strongest body, and the stoutest spirit. David was famed for his courage and great exploits; and yet when God contended with him by bodily sickness, and the impressions of his wrath upon his mind, his hair is cut, his heart fails him, and he is become weak as water. Therefore

let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor any man set grief at defiance; however it may be thought at a distance.

3. His friends were unkind to him, *ver. 11.* *My lovers* (such as had been merry with him in the day of his mirth) now *stand aloof from my sore:* they would not sympathize with him in his griefs, nor so much as come within hearing of his complaints; but, like the priest and Levite, *Luke x. 31.* *passed by on the other side.* Even his kinsmen, that were bound to him by blood and alliance, stood afar off. See what little reason we have to trust in man, or to wonder if we be disappointed in our expectations of kindness from men. Adversity tries friendship, and separates between the precious and the vile. It is our wisdom to make sure a friend in heaven, who will not stand aloof from our sore, and from whose love no tribulation or distress shall be able to separate us. David in his troubles was a type of Christ in his agony, Christ on his cross, feeble and sore broken, and then deserted by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off.

Lastly, In the midst of his complaints, he comforts himself with the cognizance God graciously took both of his griefs and of his prayers, *ver. 9.* *Lord, all my desire is before thee;* thou knowest what I want, and what I would have, *my groaning is not hid from thee.* Thou knowest the burthens I groan under, and the blessings I groan after. The groanings which cannot be uttered, are not hid from him that *searcheth the heart,* and *knows what is the mind of the spirit,* *Rom. viii. 26, 27.* In singing this, and praying it over, whatever burthen lies upon our spirits, we should by faith cast it upon God, and all our care concerning it, and then be easy.

12. They also that seek after my life, lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt, speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. 13. But I, as a deaf man heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. 14. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. 15. For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O LORD my God. 16. For I said, *Hear me,* lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. 17. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. 18. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. 19. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. 20. They also that render evil for good, are mine adversaries: because I follow the thing that good is. 21. Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me. 22. Make haste to help me, O LORD, my salvation.

In these verses,

1. David complains of the power and malice of his enemies, who it should seem not only took occasion from the weakness of his body, and the trouble of his mind, to insult over him, but took advantage from thence to do him a mischief. He hath a great deal to say against them, which he humbly offers as a reason why God should appear for him, as *Psal. xxv. 19.* *Consider mine enemies.*

(1.) They are very spiteful and cruel; they seek my hurt; nay, they *seek after my life*, *ver. 12.* That life which was so precious in the sight of the Lord, and all good men, was aimed at, as if it had been forfeited, or a publick nuisance; such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman; it would wound the head, tho' it can but reach the heel. It is the blood of the saints that is thirsted after.

(2.) They are very subtle and politick; they lay snares, they imagine deceits, and herein they are restless and unwearied, they do it all the day long; they speak mischievous things one to another, *i. e.* Every one has something or other to propose, that may be a mischief to me. Mischief covered and carried on by deceit, may well be called a snare.

(3.) They are very insolent and abusive; *When my foot slippeth, i. e.* when I fall into any trouble, or when I make any mistake, misplace a word, or take a false step, they magnify themselves against me; they are pleased with it, and promise themselves that it will ruin my interest, and that if I slip, I shall certainly fall and be undone.

(4.) They are not only unjust, but very ungrateful; they *hate me wrongfully*, *ver. 19.* I never did them any ill turn, nor so much as bore them any ill will, nor ever gave them any provocation; nay, *they render evil for good*, *ver. 20.* Many a kindness I have done them, for which I might have expected a return of kindness; but *for my love they are my adversaries*, *Psal. civ. 4.* Such a rooted enmity there is in the hearts of wicked men to goodness for its own sake, that they hate it, even then when they themselves have the benefit of it; they hate prayer, even

even in those that pray for them; and hate peace, even in those that would be at peace with them; but very ill-natured those are whom no courtesy will oblige, but they are rather exasperated by it.

(5.) They are very impious and devilish; they are my adversaries purely because I follow the thing that good is; they hated him not only for his kindness to them, but for his devotion and obedience to God; they hated him because they hated God, and all that bear his image. If we suffer ill for doing well, we must not think it strange; from the beginning it was so; Cain slew Abel, because his works were righteous; nor must we think it hard, because it will not be always so; for so much the greater will our reward be.

(6.) They are many and mighty; they are lively, they are strong, they are multiplied, *ver. 19. Lord, how they are increased that trouble me?* Psal. iii. 1. Holy David was weak and fainty, his heart panted, and his strength failed, he was melancholy, and of a sorrowful spirit, and persecuted by his friends, but at the same time his wicked enemies were strong and lively, and their number increased; let us not therefore pretend to judge of men's characters by their outward condition; none knows love or hatred by all that is before them. It should seem that David in this, as in other complaints he makes of his enemies, has an eye to Christ, whose persecutors were such as are here described, perfectly lost to all honour and virtue; none hate christianity, but such as have first divested themselves of the first principles of humanity, and broken through its most sacred bonds.

2. He reflects with comfort upon his own peaceable and pious behaviour, under all the injuries and indignities that were done him. It is then only that our enemies do us a real mischief, when they provoke us to sin, (*Neb. vi. 13.*) when they prevail to put us out of the possession of our own souls, and drive us from God and our duty; if by divine grace we are enabled to prevent this mischief, we quench their fiery darts, and save ourselves harmless; if still we hold fast our integrity and our peace, who can hurt us? This David did here.

(1.) He kept his temper, and was not ruffled or discomposed by any of the slights that were put upon him, or the mischievous things that were said or done against him, *ver. 13, 14. I as a deaf man heard not, I took no notice of the affronts put upon me, did not resent them, nor was put into disorder by them, much less did I meditate revenge, or study to return the injury.* Note, The less notice we take of the unkindness and injuries that are done us, the more we consult the quiet of our own minds. Being deaf he was dumb, as a man in whose mouth there are no reproofs; he was as silent as if he had nothing to say for himself, for fear of putting himself into a heat, and incensing his enemies yet more against him, he would not only not recriminate upon them, but not so much as vindicate himself, lest his necessary defence should be construed his offence. Tho' they fought after his life, and his silence might be taken for a confession of his guilt, yet he was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Note, When our enemies are most clamorous, ordinarily it is our prudence to be silent, or to say little, lest we make ill worse. David could not hope by his mildness to win upon his enemies, or by his soft answers to turn away their wrath, for they were men of such base spirits, that they rendered him evil for good; and yet he carried it thus meekly towards them, that he might prevent his own sin, and might have the comfort of it in the reflection. Herein David was a type of Christ, who was a sheep dumb before the shearer, and when he was reviled, reviled not again; and both are examples to us not to render railing for railing.

(2.) He kept close to his God by faith and prayer, and so both supported himself under these injuries, and silenced his own resentments of them. (1.) He trusted in God, *ver. 15. I was as a man that openeth not his mouth, for in thee, O Lord, do I hope. I depend upon thee to plead my cause, and clear my innocence, and some way or other to put them to silence and shame.* His lovers and friends that should have owned him, and stood by him, and appeared as witnesses for him, withdrew from him, *ver. 10.* But God is a friend that will never fail us, if we hope in him, *I was as a man that heareth not, for thou wilt hear; What need I hear and God hear too? as 1 Pet. v. 7. He careth for you, and what need you care and God care too? Thou wilt answer; so some, and therefore I will say nothing.* Note, It is a good reason why we should bear reproach and calumny with silence and patience, because God is a witness to all the wrong that is done us, and in due time will be a witness for us, and against those that do us wrong; therefore let us be silent, because if we be, then we may expect that God will appear for us, for that is an evidence we trust in him; but if we undertake to manage for ourselves, we take God's work out of his hands, and forfeit the benefit of his appearing for us. Our Lord Jesus therefore when he suffered, threatened not, because he committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, 1 Pet. ii. 23. and we shall lose nothing at last by doing so. *Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.* (2.) He called upon God, *ver. 16. For I said hear me, that is supplied; I said so; as ver. 15. in thee do I hope, for thou wilt hear, lest they should rejoice over me; I comforted myself with that, when I was apprehensive that they would run*

me down. It is a great support to us when men are false and unkind, that we have a God to go to, whom we may be free with, and who will be faithful to us.

3. He here bewails his own follies and infirmities. (1.) He was very sensible of the present workings of corruption in him, and that he was now ready to repine at the providence of God, and to be put into a passion by the injuries men did him; *I am ready to halt, ver. 17.* This will best be explained by a reflection like this which the Psalmist made upon himself in a like case, *Psal. lxxiii. 2. My feet were almost gone, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked; so here, I was ready to halt, ready to say, I have cleansed my hands in vain.* His sorrow was continual, *All the day long have I been plagued, Psal. lxxiii. 13, 14.* and it was continually before him, he could not forbear poring upon it, and that made him almost ready to halt between religion and irreligion. The fear of this drove him to his God; in thee do I hope, not only that thou wilt plead my cause, but that thou wilt prevent my falling into sin. Good men, by setting their sorrow continually before them, have been ready to halt, who by setting God always before them, have kept their standing.

(2.) He remembered against himself his former transgressions, acknowledging that by them he had brought these troubles upon himself, and forfeited the divine protection; tho' before men he could justify himself, before God he will judge and condemn himself, *ver. 18. I will declare mine iniquity, and not cover it, I will be sorry for my sin, and not make a light matter of it; and this helped to make him silent under the rebukes of providence, and the reproaches of men.* Note, If we be truly penitent for sin, that will make us patient under affliction, and particularly under unjust censures. Two things are required in repentance, (1.) Confession of sin; *I will declare mine iniquity; I will not only in general own myself a sinner, but I will make a particular acknowledgment of what I have done amiss; we must declare our sins before God freely and fully, and with their aggravating circumstances, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves.* (2.) Contrition for sin; *I will be sorry for it, sin will have sorrow; every true penitent grieves for the dishonour he has done to God, and the wrong he has done to himself; I will be in care or fear about my sin; so some, in fear, lest it ruin me, and in care to get it pardoned.*

4. He concludes with very earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence with him, and seasonable powerful succour in his distress, *ver. 21, 22. Forsake me not, O Lord, tho' my friends forsake me, and tho' I deserve to be forsaken by thee: Be not far from me, as my unbelieving heart is ready to fear thou art.* Nothing goes nearer to the heart of a good man in affliction, than to be under the apprehension of God's deserting him in wrath; nor doth any thing therefore come more feelingly from his heart than his prayer, *Lord, be not thou far from me: make haste for my help, for I am ready to perish, and in danger of being lost, if relief do not come quickly.* God gives us leave, not only to call upon him when we are in trouble, but to hasten him. He pleads, thou art my God, whom I serve, and on whom I depend to bear me out; and my salvation, who alone art able to save me, who hast engaged thy self by promise to save me, and from whom alone I expect salvation. Is any afflicted, let him thus pray, let him thus plead, let him thus hope in singing this psalm.

P S A L M XXXIX.

David seems to have been in a great toss when he penned this psalm, and upon some account or other very uneasy; for it is with some difficulty that he conquers his passion, and composeth his spirit himself to take that good counsel, which he had given to others, *Psal. xxxvii. to rest in the Lord; and wait patiently for him, without fretting; for it is easier to give the good advice, than to give the good example of quietness under affliction.* What was the particular trouble which gave occasion for the conflict David was now in, doth not appear. Perhaps, it was the death of some dear friend or relation that was the trial of his patience, and that suggested to him these meditations of mortality; and at the same time it should seem to himself was weak and ill, and under some prevailing distemper. His enemies, likewise, were seeking advantages against him, and watched for his halting that they might have something to reproach him for; thus aggrieved, (1.) He relates the struggle that was in his breast between grace and corruption, between passion and patience, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) He meditates upon the doctrine of man's frailty and mortality, and prays to God to instruct him in it, *ver. 4—6.* (3.) He applies himself to God for the pardon of his sins, the removal of his afflictions, and the lengthning out of his life till he was ready for death, *ver. 7—13.* This is a funeral psalm, and very proper for the occasion; in singing of it we should get our hearts duly affected with the brevity, uncertainty, and calamitous state of human life; and those on whose comforts God has by death made breaches, will find this psalm of great use to them;—in order to their

their obtaining what we ought to aim much at, under such an affliction, which is to get it sanctified to us for our spiritual benefit, and to get our hearts reconciled to the holy will of God in it.

¶ To the chief musician, even to Jeduthun,
A psalm of David.

1. **I** SAID I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. 2. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good, and my sorrow was stirred. 3. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue. 4. LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. 5. Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. 6. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

David here recollects, and leaves upon record, the workings of his heart under his afflictions, and it is good for us to do so, that what was thought amiss may be amended, and what was well thought of may be improved the next time.

1. He remembered the covenants he had made with God to walk circumspectly, and to be very cautious both of what he did, and what he said. When at any time we are tempted to sin, and are in danger of falling into it, we must call to mind the solemn vows we have made against sin, against that particular sin we are upon the brink of. God can and will mind us of them, *Jer. ii. 20. Thou saidst, I will not transgress*, and therefore we ought to mind ourselves of them. So David did here, (1.) He remembers that he had resolved in general, to be very cautious and circumspect in his walking, *ver. 1. I said, I will take heed to my ways*; and it was well said, and what he would never unsay, and therefore must never gainsay. Note, (1.) It is the great concern of every one of us to take heed to our ways, that is, to walk circumspectly, while others walk at all adventures. (2.) We ought stedfastly to resolve, that we will take heed to our ways, and frequently to renew that resolution; fast bind, fast find. (3.) Having resolved to take heed to our ways, we must upon all occasions mind ourselves of that resolution, for it is a covenant never to be forgotten, but which we must be always mindful of.

(2.) He remembers that he had in particular covenanted against tongue-sins. That he would not sin with his tongue, that he would not speak amiss, either to offend God, or offend the generation of the righteous, *Psal. lxxiii. 15. It is not so easy as we could wish, not to sin in thought; but if an evil thought should arise in his mind, he would lay his hand upon his mouth, and suppress it, that it should go no further, and this is so great an attainment, that if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; and so needful a one, that he who seems to be religious, but bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain.* David had resolved, (1.) That he would at all times watch against tongue-sins. I will keep a bridle, or muzzle upon my mouth; a bridle upon it, as upon an unruly horse, to guide and direct it, to check and curb it, to keep it in the right way, and on a good pace, *see Jam. iii. 3. Watchfulness in the habit, is the bridle upon the head; watchfulness in the act and exercise, is the hand upon the bridle, a muzzle upon it, as upon an unruly dog that is fierce and doth mischief; by particular steadfast resolution, corruption is restrained from breaking out at the lips, and so is muzzled.* (2.) That he would double his guard against them, when there was most danger of scandal; *when the wicked is before me.* When he was in company with the wicked, he would take heed of saying any thing that might harden them, or give occasion to them to blaspheme. If good men light into bad company, they must take heed what they say. Or, *when the wicked is before me*, i. e. in my thoughts. When he was contemplating the pride and power, the prosperity and flourishing estate of evil doers, he was tempted to speak amiss, and therefore then he would take special care what he said. Note, The stronger the temptation to a sin is, the stronger the resolution must be against it.

2. Pursuant to these covenants, he made a shift, with much ado, to bridle his tongue, *ver. 2. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good.* His silence was commendable; and the greater the provocation was, the more praise-worthy was his silence. Watchfulness and resolution in the strength of God's grace, will do more towards the bridling of the tongue, than we can imagine, tho' it be an unruly evil. But what shall we say of his keeping silence even from good? Was it his wisdom that he refrained good discourse when the wicked

were before him, because he would not cast pearls before swine? I rather think it was his weakness; because he might not say any thing, he would say nothing, but ran into an extreme, which was a reproach to the law, for that prescribes a mean between extremes. The same law which forbids all corrupt communication, requires that which is good, and to the use of edifying, *Eph. iv. 29.*

3. The less he spoke, the more he thought, and the more warmly. Binding the distempered part did but draw the humour to it, *my sorrow was stirred, my heart was hot within me*, *ver. 3.* He could bridle his tongue, but he could not keep his passion under, tho' he suppressed the smoke, that was as a fire in his bones, and while he was musing upon his afflictions, and upon the prosperity of the wicked, the fire burned. Note, Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit, ought not to pore much, for while they suffer their thoughts to dwell upon the causes of their calamity, the fire of their discontent is fed with fuel, and burns the more furiously. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is musing, and its ill effects upon ourselves, and that is no less than burning. If therefore we would prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must redress the grievance of ungoverned thoughts.

4. When he did speak at last, it was to the purpose. *At the last I spake with my tongue*; and some make what he said to be the breach of his good purpose, and that in what he said, he sinned with his tongue; and so they make what follows to be a passionate wish, *that he might die like Elijah*, *1 Kings xix. 4. and Job, chap. vi. 8.* But I rather take it to be not the breach of his good purpose, but the reformation of his mistake in carrying it too far; he had kept silence from good, but now he would so keep silence no longer. He had nothing to say to the wicked that were before him, for to them he knew not how to place his words, but, after long musing, the first word he said was a prayer, and a devout meditation upon a subject, which it will be good for us all to think much of.

1. He prays to God to make him sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death, *ver. 4. Lord, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days.* He doth not mean, Lord, let me know how long I shall live, and when I shall die; we could not in faith pray such a prayer, for God has no where promised to let us know, but has in wisdom locked up that knowledge among the secret things which belong not to us, nor would it be good for us to know it; but, *Lord, make me to know my end*, is, Lord, give me wisdom and grace to consider it, (*Deut. xxxii. 29.*) and to improve what I know concerning it, *the living know that they shall die*, *Eccl. ix. 5.* but few care for thinking of it; we therefore need to pray, that God by his grace would conquer that aversion, which is in our corrupt hearts, to the thoughts of death. Lord, make me to consider, (1.) What death is; it is my end, the end of my life, and all the employments and enjoyments of life; it is the end of all men, *Eccl. vii. 2.* It is a final period to our state of probation and preparation, and an awful entrance upon a state of recompence and retribution. To the wicked man, it is the end of all his joys; to a godly man, it is the end of all his griefs. Lord, give me to know my end, i. e. to be better acquainted with death, and to make it more familiar to me, *Job xvii. 14.* and to be more affected with the greatness of the change. Lord, give me to consider what a serious thing it is to die. (2.) How near it is: Lord, give me to consider the measure of my days, that they are measured in the counsel of God, the end is a fixed end, so the word signifies, *my days are determined*, *Job xiv. 5.* And that the measure is but short; my days will soon be numbered and finished. When we look upon death as a thing at a distance, we are tempted to adjourn the necessary preparations for it; but when we consider how short life is, we shall see ourselves concerned to do what our hand finds to do, not only with all our might, but with all possible expedition. (3.) That it is continually working in us. Lord, give me to consider how frail I am, how scanty the stock of life is, and how fainty the spirits, which are as the oil to keep that lamp burning. We find by daily experience, that the earthly house of this tabernacle is mouldring, and going to decay, Lord, make us to consider this, that we may secure mansions in the house not made with hands.

2. He meditates upon the brevity and vanity of life, pleading it with God for relief under the burdens of life, as Job often, and pleading it with himself for his quickning to the business of life.

1. Man's life on earth is short, and of no continuance, and that is a reason why we should sit loose to it, and prepare for the end of it, *ver. 5. Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth*, the breadth of four fingers, a certain dimension, a small one, and the measure whereof we have always about us, always before our eyes; we need no rod, no pole, no measuring line, wherewith to take the dimension of our days, nor any skill in arithmetick wherewith to compute the number of them; no, we have the standard of them at our fingers end, and there is no multiplication of it, it is but one hand-breadth in all. Our time is short, and God has made it so; for the number of our months is with him: It is short, and he knows it to be so;

so; it is as nothing before thee. He remembers *how short our time is*, Psal. lxxxix. 47. It is nothing in comparison with thee; so some. All time is nothing to God's eternity, much less our share of time.

2. Man's life on earth is vain, and of no value, and therefore it is folly to be fond of it, and wisdom to make sure of a better life. Adam is Abel, man is vanity in his present state; is not what he seems to be, has not what he promised himself, he and all his comforts lie at a continual uncertainty, and if there were not another life after this, all things considered, he were made in vain. He is vanity, *i. e.* he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe how emphatically this truth is expressed here. (1.) Every man is vanity, without exception, high and low, rich and poor, all meet in this. (2.) He is so at his best estate, when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, and the height of prosperity; when he is most easy and merry, and secure, and thinks his mountain stands strong. (3.) He is altogether vanity, as vain as you can imagine. All man is all vanity, so it may be read; every thing about him is uncertain, nothing is substantial and durable but what relates to the new man. (4.) Verily he is so. This is a truth of undoubted certainty, but which we are very unwilling to believe, and need to have solemnly attested to us, as indeed it is by frequent instances. (5.) Selah is annexed, as a note commanding observation. Stop here, and pause a while, that you may take time to consider and apply this truth, that every man is vanity. We ourselves are so.

Now for the proof of the vanity of man, as mortal, he here instances in three things, and shews the vanity in each of them, *ver. 6.* (1.) The vanity of our joys and honours, surely every man walketh (even when he walks in state, when he walks in pleasure) in a shadow, in an image, in a vain shew. When he makes a figure, his fashion passeth away, and his great pomp is but great fancy, *Aets xxv. 23.* It is but a shew, and therefore a vain shew, like the rain-bow, the gaudy colours of which must needs vanish and disappear quickly, when the substratum is but a cloud, a vapour; such is life, *Jam. iv. 14.* and therefore such are all the gaieties of it. (2.) The vanity of our griefs and fears: *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* Our disquietments are often groundless; we vex ourselves without any just cause, and the occasions of our trouble are many times the creatures of our own fancy and imagination, and they are always fruitless; we disquiet ourselves in vain, for we cannot with all our disquietment alter the nature of things, nor the counsel of God: things will be as they are, when we have disquieted ourselves never so much about them. (3.) The vanity of our cares and toils. He takes a great deal of pains to heap up riches, and they are but like heaps of muck in the furrows of the field, good for nothing unless they be spread. But when he has filled his treasures with his trash, he *knows not who shall gather them*, nor to whom they shall descend when he is gone; for he shall not take them away with him. He asks not, *for whom do I labour?* and that is his folly, *Ecc. iv. 8.* But if he did ask, he could not tell whether he should be a wife man or a fool, a friend or a foe, *Ecc. ii. 19.* *This is vanity.*

7. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. 8. Deliver me from all my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish. 9. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. 10. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. 11. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah. 12. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry, hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. 13. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

The psalmist having meditated on the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the vanity and vexation of spirit that attends all the comforts of life, here in these verses turns his eyes and heart heaven-ward; when there is no solid satisfaction to be had in the creature, it is to be found in God, and in communion with him; and to him we should be driven by our disappointments in the world. David here speaks,

1. His dependence on God, *ver. 7.* Seeing all is vanity, and man himself is so, (1.) He despairs of a happiness in the things of the world, and disclaims all expectations from it. *Now, Lord, what wait I for?* even nothing from the things of sense and time; I have nothing to wish for, nothing to hope for from this earth. Note, The consideration of the vanity and frailty of human life should deaden our desires to the things of this world, and lower our expectations from it. If the world be such a thing as this, God deliver me from having or seeking my portion in it. We cannot count upon constant health and

prosperity, nor upon comfort in every relation, for it is all as uncertain as our continuance here. Now, 'Tho' I have sometimes foolishly promised my self this and the other from the world, now I am of another mind. (2.) He takes hold of happiness and satisfaction in God; *my hope is in thee.* Note, When creature-confidences fail, it is our comfort that we have a God to go to, a God to trust to, and we should thereby be quickened to take so much the faster hold of him by faith.

2. His submission to God, and his chearful acquiescence in his holy will, *ver. 9.* If our hope be in God for a happiness in the other world, we may well afford to reconcile ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence concerning us in this world. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth*, in a way of complaint and murmuring; he now again recovered that serenity and sedateness of mind which was disturbed, *ver. 2.* Whatever comforts he is deprived of, whatever crosses he is burthened with, he will be easy; because thou didst it. It did not come to pass by chance, but according to thine appointment. We may here see (1.) A good God doing all, and ordering all events concerning us. Of every event we may say, this is the finger of God, it is the Lord's doing, whoever were the instruments. (2.) A good man for that reason saying nothing against it: He is dumb, he has nothing to object, no question to ask, no dispute to raise upon it: All that God doth is well done.

3. His desire towards God, and the prayers he puts up to him; *Is any afflicted? let him pray*, as David here,

1. For the pardoning of his sin, and the preventing of his shame, *ver. 8.* Before he prays (*ver. 10.*) *Remove thy stroke from me*; he prays, *ver. 8.* *Deliver me from all mine offences*, from the guilt I have contracted, the punishment I have deserved, and the power of corruption I have been captivated by. When God forgives our sins, he delivers us from them, he delivers us from them all. He pleads, *make me not a reproach to the foolish.* Wicked people are foolish people; and then they shew their folly most, when they think to shew their wit, by scoffing at God's people. When David prays, that God would pardon his sins, and not make him a reproach, it is to be taken as a prayer for peace of conscience; Lord, leave me not to the power of melancholy, which the foolish will laugh at me for. And as a prayer for grace, that God would never leave him to himself, so far as to do any thing that might make him a reproach to bad men. Note, This is a good reason why we should both watch and pray against sin, because the credit of our profession is nearly concerned in the preservation of our integrity.

2. For the removal of his affliction, that he might speedily be eased of his present burthens, *ver. 10.* *Remove thy stroke away from me.* Note, When we are under the correcting hand of God, our eye must be to God himself, and not to any other for relief; he only that inflicts the stroke can remove it. And we may then in faith, and with satisfaction, pray that our afflictions may be removed, when our sins are pardoned, *Isa. xxxviii. 17.* and when as here the affliction is sanctified, and has done its work, and we are humbled under the hand of God.

1. He pleads the great extremity he was reduced to by his affliction, which made him the proper object of God's compassion. *I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.* His sickness prevailed to that degree that his spirits failed, his strength was wasted, and his body emaciated. The blow or conflict of thine hand has brought me even to the gates of death. Note, The strongest, and boldest, and best, of men cannot bear up under, much less make head against, the power of God's wrath. It was not his case only, but any man will find himself an unequal match for the Almighty, *ver. 11.* When God doth at any time contend with us, when with rebukes he corrects us, (1.) We cannot impeach the equity of his controversy, but must acknowledge that he is righteous in it; for whenever he correcteth man it is for iniquity: Our ways and our doings procure the trouble to ourselves, and we are beaten with a rod of our own making. It is the yoke of our transgressions, tho' it be *bound with his hand*, *Lam. i. 14.* (2.) We cannot oppose the effects of his controversy, but he will be too hard for us. As we have nothing to move in arrest of his judgment, so we have no way of escaping the execution. God's rebukes make man's beauty to consume away like a moth, we see it often, we feel it sometimes how much the body is weakned and decayed by sickness in a little time; the countenance is changed; where is the ruddy cheek and lip, the sprightly eye, the lively look, the smiling face? It is the reverse of all this. What a poor thing is beauty? and what fools are they that are proud of it, or in love with it, when it will certainly, and may quickly be consumed thus? Some make the moth to represent man, who is as easily crushed as a moth with the touch of a finger, *Job iv. 19.* Others make it to represent the divine rebukes, which silently and insensibly waste and consume us, as the moth doth the garment. All which abundantly proves what he had said before, that surely every man is vanity, weak and helpless, so he will be found when God comes to contend with him.

(2.) He pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. He hoped the end was accomplished for which it was sent, and that therefore it would be removed in mercy, and unless

less an affliction hath done its work, tho' it may be removed, it is not removed in mercy. (1.) It had set him a weeping, and he hoped God would take notice of that, when the Lord God called to mourning he answered the call, and accommodated himself to the dispensation, and therefore could in faith pray, *Lord, hold not thy peace at my tears*, ver. 12. He that doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, much less his own children, will not hold his peace at their tears, but will either speak deliverance for them, (and if he speak it is done) or the mean time speak comfort to them, and make them to hear joy and gladness. (2.) It had set him a praying; and afflictions are sent to stir up prayer. If they have that effect, and when we are afflicted we pray more, and pray better than before, we may hope that God will hear our prayer, and give ear to our cry; for the prayer which by his providence he gives occasion for, and which by his Spirit of grace he indites, shall not return void. (3.) It had helped to wean him from the world, and to take his affections off from it; now he begun more than ever to look upon himself as a stranger and sojourner here, like all his fathers, not at home in this world, but travelling through it to another, to a better, and would never reckon himself at home till he came to heaven. He pleads it with God; Lord, take cognizance of me, and of my wants and burthens, for I am a stranger here, and therefore meet with strange usage; I am slighted and oppressed as a stranger, and whence should I expect relief but from thee, from that other country to which I belong?

Lastly, He prays for a reprieve yet a little longer, ver. 13. *O spare me, ease me, raise me up from this illness*, that I may recover strength both in body and mind, that I may get into a more calm and composed frame of spirit, and may be better prepared for another world, before I go hence by death, and shall be no more in this world. Some make this to be a passionate wish, that God would send him help quickly, or it would be too late, like that, *Job x. 20, 21*. But I rather take it as a pious prayer, that God would continue him here till by his grace he had made him fit to go hence, and that he might finish the work of life before his life was finished. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*.

P S A L M XL.

It should seem David penned this psalm upon occasion of his deliverance, by the power and goodness of God, from some great and pressing trouble, by which he was in danger of being overwhelmed; probably it was some trouble of mind, arising from a sense of sin, and of God's displeasure against him for it; whatever it was, the same spirit that indited his praises for that deliverance, was in him at the same time a spirit of prophecy, testifying of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; or, e'er he was aware, he was led to speak of Christ's undertaking, and the discharge of his undertaking, in words that must be applied to Christ only; and therefore how far the praises that here go before that illustrious prophecy, and the prayers that follow, may safely and profitably be applied to him, it will be worth while to consider in this psalm, (1.) David records God's favour to him, in delivering him out of his deep distress, with thankfulness to his praise, ver. 1—5. (2.) Thence he takes occasion to speak of the work of our redemption by Christ, ver. 6—10. (3.) That gives him encouragement to pray to God for mercy and grace, both for himself and for his friends, ver. 11—17. If in singing this psalm we mix faith with the prophecy of Christ, and join in sincerity with the praises and prayers here offered up, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

I WAITED patiently for the LORD, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. 2. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 3. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. 4. Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust: and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. 5. Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbred.

In these verses we have,

1. The great distress and trouble that the psalmist was in. This is supposed, ver. 12. that he was plunged into a horrible pit, and into miry clay; out of which he could not work him-

self, and in which he found himself sinking yet further. He saith nothing here either of the sickness of his body, or the insults of his enemies, and therefore we have reason to think it was some inward disquiet and perplexity of spirit that was now his greatest grievance. Despondency of spirit under the sense of God's withdrawings, and prevailing doubts and fears about the eternal state are indeed a horrible pit and miry clay, and have been so to many a dear child of God.

2. His humble attendance upon God, and his believing expectations from him in those depths. *I waited patiently for the Lord*, ver. 1. *Waiting I waited*. He expected relief from no other but from God, the same hand that tears must heal, that smites must bind up, (*Hos. vi. 1.*) or it will never be done. From God he expected relief, and he was big with the expectation, not doubting but it would come in due time. There is power enough in God to help the weakest, and grace enough in God to help the unworthiest of all his people that trust in him. But he waited patiently; which intimates that the relief did not come quickly, yet he doubted not but it would come, and resolved to continue believing, and hoping, and praying, till it did come. Those whose expectation is from God, may wait with assurance, but must wait with patience. Now this is very applicable to Christ. His agony both in the garden, and on the cross, was the same continued, and it was a horrible pit and miry clay. Then was his soul troubled and exceeding sorrowful; but then he prayed, *Father, glorify thy name, Father, save me*; then he kept hold of his relation to his Father, my God, my God, and thus waited patiently for him.

3. His comfortable experience of God's goodness to him in his distress, which he records for the honour of God, and his own and others encouragement.

(1.) God answered his prayers: *He inclined unto me, and heard my cry*. Those that wait patiently for God, tho' they may wait long, do not wait in vain. Our Lord Jesus was heard in that he feared, Heb. v. 7. Nay, he was sure the Father heard him always.

(2.) He silenced his fears, and stilled the tumult of his spirits, and gave him a settled peace of conscience, ver. 2. He brought me out of that horrible pit of despondency and despair, scattered the clouds, and shone bright upon my soul, with the assurances of his favour, and not only so, but *set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings*. Those that have been under the prevalence of a religious melancholy, and by the grace of God have been relieved, may apply this very feelingly to themselves, they are brought up out of a horrible pit, and (1.) The mercy is completed by the setting of their feet upon a rock, where they find firm footing, are as much elevated with the hopes of heaven, as they were before cast down with the fears of hell. Christ is the rock on which a poor soul may stand fast, and on whose mediation alone between us and God we can build any solid hopes or satisfaction. (2.) It is continued in the establishment of their goings. Where God has given a steadfast hope, he expects there should be a steady, regular, conversation, and if that be the blessed fruit of it, we have reason to acknowledge with abundance of thankfulness the riches and power of his grace.

(3.) He filled him with joy, as well as peace in believing. *He hath put a new song in my mouth, i. e.* He has given me cause to rejoice, and a heart to rejoice; he was brought as it were into a new world, and that filled his mouth with a new song, even praise to our God, for to his praise and glory must all our songs be sung. Fresh mercies, especially such as we never yet received, call for new songs. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, in his reception to paradise, his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the joy and glory set before him, he was brought out of the horrible pit, set upon a rock, and had a new song put in his mouth.

4. The good improvement that should be made of this instance of God's goodness to David.

1. David's experience would be an encouragement to many to hope in God, and for that end he leaves them here upon record. *Many shall see and fear, and trust in the Lord*. They shall fear the Lord and his justice, which brought David, and the son of David into that horrible pit, and shall say, if this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? They shall fear the Lord and his goodness, in filling the mouth of David, and the Son of David, with new songs of joy and praise. There is a holy, reverent fear of God, which is not only consistent with, but the foundation of our hope in him. They shall not fear him and shun him, but fear him, and trust in him in their greatest straits, not doubting but to find them as able and ready to help them, as David did in his distress. God's dealings with our Lord Jesus are our great encouragement to trust in God; when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief for our sins, he demanded our debt from him, and when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, he made it to appear that he had accepted the payment he made, and was satisfied with it, and what greater encouragement can we have to fear and worship God, and to *trust in him*? See *Rom. iv. 25.—v. 14, 21*.

The psalmist invites others to make God their hope, as he did, by pronouncing those happy that do so, ver. 4. *Blessed is*

the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and him only, that has great and good thoughts of him, and is entirely devoted to him, and respecteth not the proud, doth not do as they do that trust in themselves, nor depend upon those who proudly encourage others to trust in them, for both the one and the other turn aside to lies, as indeed all those do that turn aside from God. This is applicable, particularly, to our faith in Christ: Blessed are they that trust in him, and in his righteousness alone, and respect not the proud Pharisees, that set up their own righteousness in competition with that, that will not be governed by their dictates, nor turn aside to lies with the unbelieving Jews, who submit not to the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3. Blessed are they that escape this temptation.

2. The joyful sense he had of this mercy, led him to observe with thankfulness, the many other favours he had received from God, ver. 5. When God puts new songs into our mouth, we must not forget our former songs, but repeat them, *Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done*, both for me and others; this is but one of many; many are the benefits with which we are daily loaded, both by the providence, and by the grace of God. (1.) They are his works: Not only the gifts of his bounty, but the operations of his power, he works for us, he works in us, and thus he favours us with matter not only for thanks, but for praise. (2.) They are his wonderful works; the contrivance of them admirable, his condescension to us, in bestowing them upon us, admirable; eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. (3.) His wonderful works are all the product of his thoughts to us-ward. He doth all according to the counsel of his own will, Eph. i. 11. the purposes of his grace which he purposed in himself, Eph. iii. 11. They are the projects of infinite wisdom, the designs of everlasting love, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Jer. xxxi. 3. *Thoughts of good and not of evil*, Jer. xxix. 11. His gifts and callings will therefore be without repentance, because they are not sudden resolves, but the result of his thoughts, his many thoughts, to us-ward. (4.) They are innumerable; they cannot be methodized or reckoned up in order; there is an order in all God's works, but they are so many that present themselves to our view at once, that we know not where to begin, nor which to name next; the order of them, and their natural references and dependences, and how the links of the golden chain are joined, is a mystery to us, and what we shall not be able to account for, till the vail be rent, and the mystery of God finished. Nor can they be counted, not the very heads of them; when we have said the most we can of the wonders of divine love to us, we must conclude with an *Et cætera*, and adore the depth, despairing to find the bottom.

6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. 7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: 8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. 9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD; thou knowest. 10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness, and thy truth, from the great congregation.

The psalmist being struck with amazement at the wonderful works that God had done for his people, is strangely carried out here to foretell that work of wonder which excelleth all the rest, and is the foundation and fountain of all, that of our redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. God's thoughts which were to us-ward concerning that work, were the most curious, the most copious, the most gracious, and therefore above any other to be most admired. This paragraph is quoted by the apostle, Heb. x. 5, &c. and applied to Christ, and his undertaking for us. As in the institutions, so in the devotions of the Old Testament there is more of Christ, than, perhaps, the Old Testament saints were aware of; and when the apostle would shew us the Redeemer's voluntary undertaking of his work, he doth not fetch his account out of the book of God's secret counsels, which belong not to us, but from the things revealed. Observe,

1. The utter insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to atone for sin in order to our peace with God, and our happiness in him: *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire*, i. e. thou wouldst not have the Redeemer to offer them; something he must have to offer, but not these, Heb. viii. 3. therefore he must not be of the house of Aaron; Heb. vii. 14. Or, in the days of the Messiah, burnt-offering and sin-offering will be no longer required, but all those ceremonial institutions will be abolished. But that is not all, even while the law concerning them was in full force, it might be said, God did not desire them, nor accept them for their own sake; they could not take away the guilt of sin by satisfying God's justice; the life of a sheep, which

is so much inferior in value to that of a man, (Matt. xii. 12.) could not pretend to be an equivalent, much less an expedient, to preserve the honour of God's government and laws, and repair the injury done to that honour by the sin of man. They could not take away the terror of sin by pacifying the conscience, nor the power of sin, by sanctifying the nature; it was impossible, Heb. ix. 9.—x. 1, 2, 3, 4. What there was in them that was valuable, resulted from their reference to Jesus Christ, of whom they were types; shadows indeed, but shadows of good things to come, and trials of the faith and obedience of God's people; of their obedience to the law, and their faith in the gospel. But the substance must come, which is Christ, who must bring that glory to God, and that grace to man, which it was impossible those sacrifices should ever do.

2. The designation of our Lord Jesus to the work and office of mediator: *Mine ears hast thou opened*, i. e. God the Father disposed him to the undertaking, Isa. l. 5, 6. and then obliged him to go through with it. *Mine ear hast thou digged*. It is supposed to allude to the law and custom of binding servants to serve for ever, by boring their ear to the door-post, see Exod. xxi. 6. Our Lord Jesus was so in love with his undertaking, that he would not go out free from it, and therefore engaged to persevere for ever in it; and for this reason he is able to save us to the uttermost, because he has engaged to serve his Father to the uttermost, who upholds him in it, Isa. xlii. 1.

3. His own voluntary consent to this undertaking: *Then said I, lo, I come*. Then, when sacrifice and offering would not do, rather than the work should be undone, I said, lo, I come, to enter the lists with the powers of darkness, and to advance the interests of God's glory and kingdom. This speaks three things; (1.) That he freely offered himself to this service, which he was under no engagement at all to, prior to his own voluntary susception. It was no sooner proposed to him, but with the greatest cheerfulness he consented to it, and was wonderfully well-pleased with the undertaking; had he not been perfectly voluntary in it, he could not have been a surety, he could not have been a sacrifice; for it is by this will (this *animus offerentis*) that we are sanctified, Heb. x. 10. (2.) That he firmly obliged himself to it. I come, i. e. I promise to come in the fulness of time. And therefore the apostle saith it was when he came into the world, that he had an actual regard to this promise; by which he had engaged his heart to approach unto God. He thus entered into bonds not only to shew the greatness of his love, but because he was to have the honour of his undertaking before he had fully performed it: Tho' the price was not paid, it was secured to be paid, so that he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (3.) That he frankly owned himself engaged. He said, lo, I come, said it all along to the Old Testament saints, who therefore knew him by the title of *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, *He that should come*. This word was the foundation on which they built their faith and hope, and which they looked and longed for the accomplishment of.

4. The reason why he came in pursuance of his undertaking: because in the volume of the book it was written of him, (1.) In the close rolls of the divine decree and counsel: There it was written that his ear was opened, and he said, lo, I come; There the covenant of redemption was recorded, the counsel of peace between the Father and the Son; and to that he had an eye in all he did, the commandment he received of his Father. (2.) In the letters patent of the Old Testament, Moses, and all the prophets, testified of him, in all the volumes of that book something or other was written of him, which he had an eye to, that all might be accomplished, John xix. 28.

5. The pleasure he took in his undertaking: Having freely offered himself to it, he did not fail, nor was discouraged, but proceeded with all possible satisfaction to himself, ver. 8, 9. *I delight to do thy will, O my God*; It was to Christ his meat and drink to go on with the work appointed to him, John iv. 34. and the reason here given is, *thy law is within my heart*; It is written there, it rules there, it is an active commanding principle there. It is meant of the law, concerning the work and office of the mediator, what he was to do and suffer; this law was dear to him; and had an influence upon him in his whole undertaking. Note, When the law of God is written in our hearts, our duty will be our delight.

6. The publication of the gospel to the children of men, even in the great congregation, ver. 9, 10. The same that as a priest wrought our redemption for us, as a prophet by his own preaching first, then by his apostles, and still by his word and Spirit, makes it known to us. The great salvation began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3. It is the gospel of Christ that is preached to all nations. Observe, (1.) What it is that is preached: It is righteousness, ver. 9. God's righteousness, ver. 10. the everlasting righteousness which Christ has brought in, Dan. ix. 24. compare Rom. i. 16, 17. It is God's faithfulness to his promise, and the salvation which had long been looked for. It is God's loving kindness and his truth, his mercy according to his word. Note, In the work of our redemption, we ought to take notice how bright all the divine attributes shine, and give

give to God the praise of each of them. (2.) To whom it is preached; to the great congregation, *ver. 9.* and again, *ver. 10.* When Christ was here on earth, he preached to multitudes, thousands at a time. The gospel was preached both to Jews and Gentiles, to great congregations of both; solemn religious assemblies are a divine institution, and in them the glory of God, in the face of Christ, ought to be both praised to the glory of God, and preached for the edification of men. (3.) How it is preached; freely and openly, *I have not refrained my lips, I have not hid it, I have not concealed it.* This intimates, that whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ, would be in great temptation to hide it, and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of great opposition; but Christ himself, and those whom he calls to that work, set their faces *as a flint*, Isa. l. 7. and were wonderfully carried on in it. And it is well for us that they were so, for by this means our eyes come to see this joyful light, and our ears to hear this joyful sound; which otherwise we might for ever have perished in ignorance of.

11. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy loving-kindness, and thy truth continually preserve me. 12. For innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me. 13. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me. 14. Let them be ashamed and confounded together, that seek after my soul to destroy it: let them be driven backward, and put to shame that wish me evil. 15. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame, that say unto me, Aha, aha. 16. Let all those that seek thee, rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. 17. But I am poor and needy, yet the LORD thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer, make no tarrying, O my God.

The psalmist having meditated upon the work of redemption, and spoken of it in the person of the Messiah, now comes to make improvement of the doctrine of his mediation between us and God, and therefore speaks in his own person. Christ having done his Father's will, and finished his work, and given orders for the preaching of the gospel to every creature, we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace.

1. This may encourage us to pray for the mercy of God, and to put ourselves under the protection of that mercy, *ver. 11.* Lord, thou hast not spared thy Son, nor withheld him, withhold not thou thy tender mercies then, which thou hast laid up for us in him; for wilt thou not *with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. *Let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.* The best saints are in continual danger, and see themselves undone, if they be not continually preserved by the grace of God; and the everlasting loving-kindness and truth of God is that which we have to depend upon for our preservation to the heavenly kingdom, *Psal. lxi. 7.*

2. This may encourage us in reference to the guilt of sin, that Jesus Christ has done that towards our discharge from it, which sacrifice and offering could not do. See here, (1.) The frightful sight he had of sin, *ver. 12.* This was it that made the discovery he was now favoured with of a Redeemer very welcome to him. He saw his iniquities to be evils, the worst of evils; he saw that they compassed him about, in all the reviews of his life, and his reflections upon each step of it, still he discovered something amiss. The threatening consequences of his sin surrounded him; look which way he would, he saw some mischief or other waiting for him, which he was conscious to himself his sins had deserved. He saw them taking hold of him, arresting him, as the bailiff doth the poor debtor; he saw them to be innumerable, and *more than the hairs of his head*; convinced, awakened, consciences are apprehensive of danger, from the numberless number of the sins of infirmity, which seem small as hairs, but being numerous, are very dangerous; *Who can understand his errors?* God numbers our hairs, *Matt. x. 30.* which yet we cannot number, so he keeps an account of our sins, which we keep no account of. The sight of sin so oppressed him, that he could not hold up his head. *I am not able to look up,* much less could he keep up his heart, *therefore my heart faileth me.* Note, The sight of our sins in their own colours, would drive us to distraction, if we had not at the same time some sight of a Saviour. (2.) The careful recourse he had to God under the sense of sin, *ver. 13.* seeing himself brought by his sins to the very brink of ruin, eternal ruin, with what a holy passion does he cry out, *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me,* *ver. 13.* O save me from the wrath to come, and the present terrors I am in thro' the apprehensions of that wrath; I

am undone, I die, I perish, without speedy relief. In a case of this nature, where the bliss of an immortal soul is concerned, delays are dangerous, therefore, *O Lord, make haste to help me.*

3. This may encourage us to hope for victory over our spiritual enemies that seek after our souls to destroy them, *ver. 14.* the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour; if Christ has triumphed over them, we through him shall be more than conquerors. In the belief of this we may pray with humble boldness, *Let them be ashamed and confounded together, and driven backward,* *ver. 14.* *Let them be desolate,* *ver. 15.* Both the conversion of a sinner, and the glorification of a saint, are great disappointments to Satan, who doth his utmost, with all his power and subtilty, to hinder both; now our Lord Jesus having undertaken to bring about the salvation of all his chosen, we may in faith pray, that both these ways that great adversary may be confounded. When a child of God is brought into that horrible pit, and the miry clay, Satan cries, Aha, aha, thinking he has gained his point, but he shall rage when he sees the brand plucked out of the fire, and shall be *desolate for a reward of his shame.* *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.* *The accuser of the brethren is cast out.*

4. This may encourage all that seek God, and love his salvation, to rejoice in him, and to praise him, *ver. 16.* See here, (1.) The character of good people, conformable to the laws of natural religion, they seek God, desire his favour, and in all their exigencies apply themselves to him, as a people should seek unto their God: And conformable to the laws of revealed religion, they love his salvation, that great salvation of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, which the Redeemer undertook to work out, when he said, *Lo, I come.* All that shall be saved love the salvation, not only as a salvation from hell, but a salvation from sin. (2.) The happiness secured to good people by this prophetic prayer: They that seek God shall rejoice and be glad in him, and with good reason, for he will not only be found of them, but will be their bountiful rewarder. They that love his salvation shall be filled with the joy of his salvation, and shall say continually, *The Lord be magnified,* and thus they shall have a heaven upon earth; blessed are they that are thus still praising God.

Lastly, This may encourage the saints in distress and affliction to trust in God, and comfort themselves in him, *ver. 17.* David himself was one of these, *I am poor and needy,* a king, perhaps, now on the throne, and yet being troubled in spirit, he calls himself poor and needy, lost and undone without a Saviour; in want and distress, yet *the Lord thinketh upon me,* in and through the Mediator; by whom we are made accepted. Men forget the poor and needy, and seldom think of them, but God's thoughts toward them which he had spoken of, *ver. 5.* are their support and comfort. They may assure themselves that God is their help under their troubles, and will be in due time their deliverer out of their troubles, and will make no long tarrying; for the vision is for an appointed time, and therefore tho' it tarry, we may wait for it, for it shall come; it will come, it will not tarry.

P S A L M XLI.

God's kindness and truth have often been the support and comfort of the saints, when they have had most experience of men's unkindness and treachery; David here found them so upon a sick bed, when he found his enemies very barbarous, but his God very gracious. (1.) He here comforts himself in his communion with God under his sickness, by faith receiving and laying hold of God's promises to him, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* and lifting up his heart in prayer to God, *ver. 4.* (2.) He here represents the malice of his enemies against him, their malicious censures of him, their spiteful reflections upon him, and their insolent carriage towards him, *ver. 5—9.* (3.) He leaves his case with God, not doubting but that he would own and favour him, *ver. 10, 11.* and so the psalm concludes with a doxology, *ver. 13.* Is any afflicted with sickness? let him sing the beginning of the psalm; is any persecuted by enemies? let him sing the latter end of it; and we may any of us in singing of it, meditate upon both the calamities and comforts of good people in this world.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. BLESSED is he that considereth the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. 2. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. 3. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. 4. I said, LORD, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.

In these verses we have,

1. God's promises of succour and comfort to those that consider the poor; and we may suppose that David makes mention of these with application, either (1.) To his friends, who were kind to him, and very considerate of his case, now he was in affliction; *Blessed is he that considers poor David*: here and there he met with one that sympathized with him, and was concerned for him, and kept up their good opinion of him, and respect for him, notwithstanding his afflictions, while his enemies were so insolent and abusive to him; on these he pronounceth this blessing, not doubting but that God would recompense to them all the kindness they had done him, particularly when they also came to be in affliction: the provocations which his enemies gave him, did but endear his friends so much the more to him: or (2.) To himself; he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had considered the poor; that when he was in honour and power at court, he had taken cognizance of the wants and miseries of the poor, and had provided for their relief, and therefore was sure God would, according to his promise, strengthen and comfort him in his sickness. Here is a comment upon that promise; *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*. Observe,

(1.) What the mercy is which is required of us: it is to consider the poor or afflicted, whether in mind, body, or estate: these we are to consider with prudence and tenderness: we must take notice of their affliction, and enquire into their state; must sympathize with them, and judge charitably concerning them; we must wisely consider the poor; i. e. we must ourselves be instructed by the poverty and affliction of others; it must be *Maschil* to us, that is the word here used.

(2.) What the mercy is that is promised to us, if we thus shew mercy: he that considers the poor, (if he cannot relieve them yet he considers them, and has a compassionate concern for them, and in relieving them, doth it considerately and with discretion) God will be sure to consider him: he shall not only be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, but he *shall be blessed upon the earth*; this branch of godliness, as much as any other, has the promise of the life that now is, and is ordinarily recompensed with temporal blessings. Liberality to the poor is the surest and safest way of thriving, such may be sure of seasonable and effectual relief from God.

(1.) In all troubles. He *will deliver them in the day of evil*, so that when the times are at the worst it shall go well with them, and they shall not fall into the calamities in which others are involved; if any be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, they shall. They who thus distinguish themselves from those that have hard hearts, God will distinguish from those that have hard usage; are they in danger? he will preserve and keep them alive; and to those who have a thousand times forfeited their lives, as the best have, it must be acknowledged a great favour if they have their *lives given them for a prey*: he doth not say they shall be preferred, but they shall be preserved and kept alive, when the arrows of death fly thick round about them. Do their enemies threaten them? God will not *deliver them into the will of their enemies*, and the most potent enemy we have can have no power against us, but what is given him from above. The good will of a God that loves us is sufficient to secure us from the ill will of all that hate us, men or devils; and that good will we may promise ourselves an interest in, if we have considered the poor, and helped to relieve and rescue them.

(2.) Particularly in sickness, ver. 3. *The Lord will strengthen him both in body and mind upon the bed of languishing*, on which he had long lain sick, and *he will make all his bed*; a very condescending expression, alluding to the care of those that nurse and tend sick people, especially of mothers for their children when they are sick, which is to make their beds easy for them; and that bed must needs be well made, which God himself has the making of; he will make all his bed from head to foot, so that no part shall be uneasy; he will turn his bed (so the word is) to shake it up, and make it very easy; or, he will turn it into a bed of health. Note, God has promised his people that he will strengthen them and make them easy under their bodily pains and sicknesses: He has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing; nor that their sickness shall not be unto death; but he has promised them to enable them to bear their affliction with patience, and cheerfully to wait the issue; the soul shall by his grace be made to dwell at ease, when the body lies in pain.

2. David's prayer, directed and encouraged by these promises, ver. 4. *I said, heal my soul*; it is good for us to keep some account of our prayers, that we may not unsay in our practices any thing that we said in our prayers. Here is, (1.) His humble petition; *Lord, be merciful to me*: he appeals to mercy, as one that knew he could not stand the test of strict justice. The best saints, even those that have been merciful to the poor, have not made God their debtor, but must throw themselves on his mercy; when we are under the rod we must thus recommend ourselves to the tender mercy of our God; *Lord, heal my soul*; sin is the sickness of the soul, pardoning mercy heals it, renewing grace heals it; and this spiritual healing we should be more earnest

No. xli.

for, than for bodily health. (2.) His penitent confession; *I have sinned against thee*; and therefore my soul needs healing; I am a sinner, a miserable sinner, therefore, *God, be merciful to me*, Luke xviii. 13. It doth not appear that this hath reference to any particular gross act of sin; but in general to his many sins of infirmity, which his sickness set in order before him, and the dread of the consequences of which made him pray, *Heal my soul*.

5. Mine enemies speak evil of me: When shall he die, and his name perish? 6. And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to it self, when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. 7. All that hate me, whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. 8. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more. 9. Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me. 10. But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. 11. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. 12. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. 13. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

David often complains of the insolent carriage of his enemies towards him when he was sick, which, as it was very barbarous in them, so it could not but be very grievous to him. They were not indeed arrived to that modern pitch of wickedness, of poisoning his meat or drink, or giving him something to make him sick, but when he was sick they insulted over him, ver. 5. *Mine enemies speak evil of me*; designing thereby to grieve his spirit, to ruin his reputation, and so to sink his interest.

1. They longed for his death; *when shall he die, and his name perish* with him: he hath but an uncomfortable life, and yet they grudged him that; but it was a useful life, he was upon all accounts the greatest ornament and blessing of his country; and yet it seems there were some who were sick of him, as the Jews were of Paul, crying out, *Away with such a fellow from the earth*: we ought not to desire the death of any, but to desire the death of useful men, for their usefulness, has much in it of the venom of the old serpent: they envied him his name, and the honour he had won, and doubted not but if he were dead, that would be laid in the dust with him; yet, see how they are mistaken, when he had served his generation he did die, (*Acts* xiii. 36.) but did his name perish? No, it lives and flourishes to this day, in the sacred writings, and will to the end of time, for the memory of the just, is, and shall be, blessed.

2. They picked up every thing they could to reproach him with, ver. 6. *If he come to see me*, as it has always been reckoned a piece of neighbourly kindness to visit the sick, *he speaketh vanity*, i. e. he pretends friendship, and that his errand is to mourn with me, and to comfort me, tells me he is very sorry to see me so much indisposed, and wisheth me my health, but it is all flattery and falsehood: We complain, and justly, of the want of sincerity in our days, and that there is scarce any true friendship to be found among men; but it seems by this the former days were no better than these; David's friends were all compliment, and had nothing of that affection for him in their hearts which they made profession of; but that was not the worst of it, it was upon a mischievous design that they came to see him, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he said or did, and might represent it as they pleased to others, with their own comments upon it, so as to render him odious or ridiculous: *His heart gathereth iniquity to itself*, puts ill constructions upon every thing, and then, when he goes among his companions, he tells it them that they may tell it others, *Report, say they, and we will report it*, Jer. xx. 10. If he made any complaints of his illness, they would reproach him for his pusillanimity; if little complaints, for his stupidity: if he prayed or gave them good counsel, they would banter it, and call it canting; if he kept silence from good when the wicked were before him, they would say he had forgot his religion now he was sick: There is no fence against those whose malice thus gathers iniquity.

3. They promised themselves that he would never recover from this sickness, nor ever wipe off the odium with which they had loaded him; they *whispered together against him*, ver. 7. speaking that secretly in one another's ears, which they could not for shame speak out, and which, if they did, they knew it would be confuted; whisperers and backbiters are put together among the worst of sinners, *Rom.* i. 29, 30. They whispered that their plot against him might not be discovered and so defeated; there is seldom whispering (we say) but there is lying, or some mischief

on foot. Those whisperers devised evil to David; concluding he would die quickly, they contrived how to break all the measures he had concerted for the publick good, to prevent the prosecution of them, and to undo all that he had hitherto been doing: this he calls devising hurt against him; and they doubted not but to gain their point, for *an evil disease, a thing of Belial*, say they, *cleaveth fast unto him*; the reproach with which they had loaded his name, they hoped would cleave so fast to it, that it would perish with him, and then they should gain their point; they went by a modern maxim, *Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhaerere*; or this disease he is now under will certainly make an end of him; for it is the punishment of some great enormous crime, which he will not be brought to repent of, and proves him, however he has appeared, a son of Belial; or, it is inflicted by Satan, who is called Belial, the wicked one, *2 Cor. vi. 15*. It is (according to a loose way of speaking some have) a devilish disease, and therefore it will *cleave fast to him*, and *now that he lieth*, now his distemper prevails so far as to oblige him to keep his bed, *he shall rise up no more*, we shall be rid of him, and divide the spoil of his preferments: we are not to think it strange, if when good men are sick, there be those that hope for their death, as well as those that fear it, which makes the world not worthy of them, *Rev. xi. 10*.

4. There was one particularly, in whom he had reposed a great deal of confidence, that took part with his enemies, and was as abusive to him as any of them, *ver. 9. My own familiar friend*; probably he means Ahithophel, who had been his bosom friend, and prime minister of state, in whom he trusted, as one inviolably firm to him, and whose advice he relied much upon in dealing with his enemies, who *did eat of his bread*, i. e. with whom he had been very intimate, and whom he had taken to sit at the table with him: nay, whom he had maintained and given a livelihood to, and so obliged both in gratitude and interest to stick to him: they that had their *maintenance from the king's palace*, did not think it meet for them to see the king's dishonour, *Ezra iv. 14*. much less to do him dishonour, yet this base and treacherous confidant of David's, forgot all the eaten bread, and lifted up his heel against him that had lifted up his head; not only deserted him, but insulted him, kicked at him, endeavoured to supplant him: those are wicked indeed, whom no courtesy done them, nor confidence reposed in them, will oblige; and let us not think it strange, if we receive abuses from such: David did, and the Son of David; for of Judas the traitor David here in the spirit spake; our Saviour himself so expounds this, and therefore gave Judas the sop, that the scripture might be fulfilled; *He that eateth bread with me, has lift up his heel against me*, *John xiii. 18, 26*. Nay, have not we ourselves carried it thus perfidiously and disingenuously towards God? We eat of his bread daily, and yet lift up the heel against him, as Jesurun, that waxed fat and kicked, *Deut. xxxii. 15*.

Now how did David bear this insolent ill-natured carriage of his enemies towards him?

1. He prayed to God that they might be disappointed. He said nothing to them, but turned himself to God, *O Lord, be thou merciful to me*, for they are unmerciful, *ver. 10*. He had prayed in reference to the guilt of his sins, *ver. 4. Lord, be merciful to me*, and now again in reference to the insults of his enemies, *Lord, be merciful to me*, for that is a prayer will fit every case; God's mercy has in it a redress for every grievance: they endeavour to run me down, but, Lord, do thou raise me up from this bed of languishing, from which they think I shall never rise. Raise me up *that I may requite them*, i. e. That I may render them good for evil; so some, for that was David's practice, *Psal. vii. 4—xcv. 13*. A good man will even wish for an opportunity of making it to appear, that he bears no malice to those that have been injurious to him; but, on the contrary, is ready to do them any good office. Or that, as a king, I may put them under the marks of my just displeasure, banish them the court, and forbid them my table for the future, which would be a necessary piece of justice for warning to others. Perhaps, in this prayer is couched a prophecy of the exaltation of Christ, whom God raised up that he might be a just avenger of all the wrongs done to him and to his people, particularly by the Jews, whose utter destruction followed not long after.

2. He assured himself that they would be disappointed, *ver. 11*. By *this I know that thou favourest me* and my interest, *because mine enemy doth not triumph over me*. They hoped for his death, but he found himself through mercy recovering, and this would add to the comfort of his recovery; (1.) That it would be a balm to his adversaries, they would be crest-fallen, and wretchedly ashamed, and there would be no occasion to upbraid them with their disappointment, they would fret at it themselves. Note, Tho' we may not take a pleasure in the fall of our enemies, we may take a pleasure in the frustrating of their designs against us. (2.) That that would be a token of God's favour to him, and a certain evidence that he did favour him, and would continue to do so. Note, When we can discern the favour of God to us in any mercy personal or publick, that doubles it and sweetens it.

3. He dependeth upon God who had thus delivered him from many an evil work, to *preserve him to his heavenly kingdom*, as *B. Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 18*. And as for me, so far as thou favourest me, as a fruit of that favour, and to qualify me for the continuance of it, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and in order to that settest me before thy face, hast thine eye always upon me for good; or because thou dost by thy grace uphold me in my integrity, I know that thou wilt in thy glory set me for ever before thy face. Note, 1. When at any time we suffer in our reputation, our chief concern should be about our integrity, and then we may cheerfully leave it to God to secure our reputation. David knows if he can but persevere in his integrity, he needs not fear his enemies triumphs over him. 2. The best man in the world holds his integrity no longer than God upholds him in it; for by his grace we are what we are, if we be left to ourselves, we shall not only fall, but fall away. 3. It is a great comfort to us, that, however we are weak, God is able to uphold us in our integrity, and will do it if we commit the keeping of it to him. 4. If the grace of God did not take a constant care of us, we should not be upheld in our integrity: his eye is always upon us, else we should soon start aside from him. 5. Those whom God now upholds in their integrity, he will set before his face for ever, and make them happy in the vision and fruition of himself: *He that endures to the end shall be saved*.

4. The psalm concludes with a solemn doxology, or adoration of God as *the Lord God of Israel*, *ver. 13*. It is not certain whether this verse pertains to this particular psalm; if so, it teaches us this, that a believing hope of our preservation through grace to glory, is enough to fill our hearts with joy, and our mouths with everlasting praise, even in our greatest straits; or, whether it were added as the conclusion of the first book of *Psalms*, which is reckoned to end here; the like being subjoined to *Psal. lxxii. Psal. lxxxix.* and *Psal. cvi.* and then it teacheth us to make God the Omega, who is the Alpha, to make him the end, who is the beginning of every good work. We are here taught, (1.) To give glory to God as the *Lord God of Israel*, a God in covenant with his people; that has done great and kind things for them, and has more and better in reserve. (2.) To give him glory as an eternal God, that has both his being and his blessedness from *everlasting and to everlasting*. (3.) To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit, intimated in a double seal set to it; *Amen, and Amen*; be it so now, be it so to all eternity. We say Amen to it, and let all others say Amen too.

P S A L M XLII.

If the book of psalms be, as some have styled it, a mirror or looking-glass of pious and devout affections, this psalm in particular deserves as much as any one psalm, to be so entitled, and is as proper as any other to kindle and excite such in us; gracious desires are here strong and fervent; gracious hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, are here struggling, but the pleasing passion comes off a conqueror; or, we may take it for a conflict between sense and faith; sense objecting, and faith answering. (1.) Faith begins with holy desires towards God, and communion with him, *ver. 1, 2*. (2.) Sense complains of the darkness and cloudiness of the present condition, aggravated by the remembrance of the former enjoyments, *ver. 3, 4*. (3.) Faith silenceth the complaint with the assurance of a good issue at last, *ver. 5*. (4.) Sense renews its complaints of the present dark and melancholy state, *ver. 6, 7*. (5.) Faith holds up the heart notwithstanding, with hope that the day will dawn, *ver. 8*. (6.) Sense repeats its lamentations, *ver. 9, 10*. and sighs out the same remonstrance it had before made of its grievances. (7.) Faith gets the last word, *ver. 11*. for the silencing of the complaints of sense, and tho' it be almost the same with that, *ver. 5*. yet now it prevails and carries the day. The title doth not tell us who was the penman of the psalm, but most probably it was David; and we may conjecture it was penned by him at a time when either by Saul's persecution, or Absalom's rebellion he was driven from the sanctuary, and cut off from the privilege of waiting upon God in publick ordinances. The strain of it is much the same with, *Psal. lxxiii.* and therefore we may presume it was penned by the same hand, and upon the same, or a like occasion. In singing it, if we be either in outward affliction or inward distress, we may accommodate to ourselves the melancholy expressions we find here; if not, we must, in singing them, sympathize with those, whose case they speak too plainly, and thank God it is not our own case; but those passages in it, which express and excite holy desires towards God, and dependence on him, we must earnestly endeavour to bring our minds up to.

¶ To the chief musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

1. **A**S the Hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? 3. My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me,

me, Where is thy God? 4. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God; with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy-day. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Holy love to God as the chief good, and our felicity, is the power of godliness; the very life and soul of religion, without which all external professions and performances are but a shell and carcase; now here we have some of the expressions of that love. Here is,

1. Holy love thirsting; love upon the wing, soaring upwards in holy desires towards the Lord, and towards the remembrance of his name, *ver. 1.* 2. *My soul panteth, thirsteth for God*, for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him. Now observe,

(1.) When it was that David thus expressed his vehement desire towards God. It was (1.) When he was debarred from his outward opportunities of waiting on God; when he was banished to the land of Jordan, a great way off from the courts of God's house. Note, Sometimes God teacheth us effectually to know the worth of mercies by the want of them: and whets our appetites to the means of grace, by cutting us short in those means; we are apt to loath that manna when we have plenty of it, which will be very precious to us if ever we come to know the scarcity of it. (2.) When he was deprived in a great measure of the inward comfort he used to have in God. He now went mourning, but he went on panting. Note, if God, by his grace, has wrought in us sincere and earnest desires towards him, we may take comfort from these, when we want those ravishing delights we have sometimes had in God, because lamenting after God, is as sure an evidence that we love him, as rejoicing in God. Before the psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs, which had sorely shaken him, he premiseth this, That he looked upon the living God as his chief good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm.

(2.) What is the object of his desire, and what it is he thus thirsts after. (1.) He pants after God, he thirsts for God; not the ordinances themselves, but the God of the ordinances. A gracious soul can take little satisfaction in God's courts, if it do not meet with God himself there; *O that I knew where I might find him!* That I might have more of the tokens of his favour, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, and the earnest of his glory. (2.) He has herein an eye to God, as the living God, that has life in himself, and is the fountain of life and all happiness to those that are his. The living God, not only in opposition to dead idols, the works of mens hands, but to all the dying comforts of this world, which perish in the using. Living souls can never take up their rest any where short of a living God. (3.) He longs to come and appear before God, to make himself known to him, as being conscious to himself of his own sincerity; to attend on him, as a servant appears before his master, to pay his respects to him, and receive his commands; to give an account to him, as one from whom our judgment proceeds. To appear before God is as much the desire of the upright, as it is the dread of the hypocrite. The psalmist knew he could not come into God's courts but he must come to his charges, for so was the law, that *none should appear before God empty*, yet he longs to come, and will not grudge the charges.

(3.) What is the degree of this desire? It is very importunate, it is his soul that pants, his soul that thirsts, which speaks not only the sincerity, but the strength of his desire; his longing for the water of the well of Bethlehem was nothing to this. He compares it to the panting of a hart, or deer, which is naturally hot and dry, especially of a hunted buck, after the water-brooks. Thus earnestly doth a gracious soul desire communion with God, thus impatient is it in the want of that communion, so impossible it should take up in any thing short of that communion, and so insatiable in taking the pleasures of that communion when the opportunity of it returns, still thirsting after the full enjoyment of him in the heavenly kingdom.

2. Holy love, mourning for God's present withdrawals, and the want of the benefit of solemn ordinances, *ver. 3.* *My tears have been my meat day and night*, during this forced absence from God's house. His circumstances were sorrowful, and he accommodated himself to them, received the impressions, and returned the expressions of sorrow; even the royal prophet was a weeping prophet, when he wanted the comforts of God's house. His tears were mingled with his meat; nay, they were *his meat day and night*, he fed, he feasted, upon his own tears, when there was such just cause for them; and it was a satisfaction to him that he found his heart so much affected with a grievance of this nature. Observe, He did not think it enough to shed a tear or two at parting from the sanctuary, to weep a farewell-prayer when he took his leave, but as long as he continued under a forced absence from that place of his delight, he never looked up, but wept day

and night. Note, Those that are deprived of the benefit of publick ordinances constantly miss them, and therefore should constantly mourn for the want of them, till they are restored to them again.

Two things aggravated his grief:

(1.) The reproaches with which his enemies teased him, *They continually say unto me, Where is thy God?* (1.) Because he was absent from the ark, the token of God's presence, judging of the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, they concluded he had lost his God. Note, Those are mistaken, who think that when they have robbed us of our bibles, and our ministers, and our solemn assemblies, they have robbed us of our God: for tho' God has tied us to them when they are to be had, he has not tied himself to them. We know where our God is, and where to find him, when we know not where his ark is, nor where to find that. Wherever we are, there is a way open heaven-ward. (2.) Because God did not presently appear for his deliverance, they concluded that he had abandoned him; but herein also they were deceived: it doth not follow that the saints have lost their God, because they have lost all their other friends. However, by this base reflection on God and his people, they added affliction to the afflicted, and that was what they aimed at. Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than that which is intended to shock its hope and confidence in God.

(2.) The remembrance of his former liberties and enjoyments, *ver. 4.* *Son, remember thy good things*, is a great aggravation of evil things; so much do our powers of reflection and prospect add to the grievance of this present time. David remembered the *days of old*, and then *his soul was poured out in him*, he melted away, and the thought almost broke his heart. He poured out his soul within him in sorrow, and then poured out his soul before God in prayer. But what was it that occasioned this colligation of spirit? It was not the remembrance of the pleasures at court, or the entertainments of his own house, from which he was now banished, that afflicted him; but the remembrance of the free access he had formerly had to God's house, and the pleasure he had in attending the sacred solemnities there. (1.) He went to *the house of God*, tho' in his time it was but a tent; nay, if this psalm was penned, as many think it was, at the time of his being persecuted by Saul, the ark was then in a private house, *2 Sam. vi. 3.* But the meanness, obscurity, and inconveniency, of the place, did not lessen his esteem of that sacred symbol of the divine presence. David was a courtier, a prince, a man of honour, a man of business, and yet very diligent in attending God's house, and joining in publick ordinances; even in the days of Saul, when he and his great men *enquired not at it*, *1 Chron. xiii. 3.* Whatever others did, David and his house would serve the Lord. (2.) He went with the multitude, and thought it no disparagement to his dignity to be at the head of a crowd in attending upon God. Nay, this added to the pleasure of it, that he was accompanied with a multitude, and therefore it is twice mentioned, as that which he greatly lamented the want of now. The more the better, in the service of God, it is the liker to heaven, and a sensible help to our comfort in the communion of saints. (3.) He went with *the voice of joy and praise*, not only with joy and praise in his heart, but with the outward expressions of it, proclaiming his joy, and speaking forth the high praises of his God. Note, When we wait upon God in publick ordinances, we have reason to do it both with cheerfulness and thankfulness, to take to ourselves the comfort, and give to God the glory of our liberty of access to him. (4.) He went to keep holy-days, not to keep them in vain mirth and recreation, but in religious exercises. Solemn days are spent most comfortably in solemn assemblies.

3. Holy love hoping, *ver. 5.* *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* His sorrow was upon a very good account, and yet it must not exceed its due limits, nor prevail to depress his spirits; he therefore communes with his own heart for his relief. Come, my soul, I have something to say to thee in thy heaviness; Let us consider (1.) The cause of it. Thou art cast down, as one stooping and sinking under a burthen, *Prov. xii. 25.* Thou art disquieted, in confusion and disorder, now why art thou so! This may be taken either as an enquiring question, let the cause of this uneasiness be duly weighed, and see whether it be a just cause? Our disquietments would many times vanish before a strict scrutiny into the grounds and reasons of them. *Why am I cast down?* Is there a cause, a real cause? Have not others more cause that do not make so much ado? Have not we at the same time cause to be encouraged? Or it may be taken as an expostulating question; those that commune much with their own hearts, will often have occasion to chide them, as David here. Why do I thus dishonour God by my melancholy dejections? Why do I discourage others, and do so much injury to my self? Can I give a good account of this tumult? (2.) The cure of it. *Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.* A believing confidence in God is a sovereign antidote against prevailing despondency and disquiet of spirit. And therefore when we chide ourselves for our dejections, we must charge ourselves to hope in God; when the soul embraces it self, it sinks; if it catch hold on the power and promise of God, it keeps the head

above water. *Hope in God*, (1.) That he shall have glory from us, *I shall yet praise him*; I shall experience such a change in my estate, that I shall not want matter for praise; and such a change in my spirit, that I shall not want a heart for praise. It is the greatest honour and happiness of a man, and the greatest desire and hope of every good man, to be unto God for a name and a praise. What is the crown of heaven's bliss but this, that there we shall be for ever praising God? And what is our support under our present woes but this, that we shall yet praise God, that they shall not prevent or abate our endless hallelujahs? (2.) That we shall have comfort in him. We shall praise him for the help of his countenance; for his favour, and the support we have by it, and the satisfaction we have in it. Those that know how to value and improve the light of God's countenance, will find in that, a suitable, seasonable, and sufficient help in the worst of times, and that which will furnish them with constant matter for praise. David's believing expectation of this kept him from sinking; nay, it kept him from drooping; his harp was a palliative cure of Saul's melancholy, but his hope was an effectual cure of his own.

6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. 7. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. 8. *Yet the LORD will command his loving kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.* 9. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy? 10. *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?* 11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, *who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

Complaints and comforts here, as before, take their turn, like day and night, in the course of nature.

1. He complains of the dejections of his spirit, but comforts himself with the thoughts of God, *ver. 6.* (1.) In his troubles, his soul was dejected, and he goes to God and tells him so, *O my God, my soul is cast down within me.* It is a great support to us, when upon any account we are distressed, that we have liberty of access to God, and liberty of speech before him, and may open to him the causes of our dejection. David had communed with his own heart about its own bitterness, and had not as yet found relief; and therefore he turns to God, and opens before him the trouble. Note, When we cannot get relief for our burthened spirits, by pleading with ourselves, we should try what we can do by praying to God, and leaving our case with him. We cannot still these winds and waves, but we know who can. (2.) In his devotions, his soul was elevated, and finding the disease very painful, he had recourse to that as a sovereign remedy. My soul is plunged; therefore, to prevent its sinking, I will remember thee, meditate upon thee, and call upon thee, and try what that will do to keep up my spirit. Note, The way to forget the sense of our miseries, is to remember the God of our mercies. It was an uncommon case, when the psalmist *remembered God and was troubled*, Psal. lxxvii. 3. Ordinarily he remembered God, and was comforted, and therefore had recourse to that expedient now. He was now driven to the utmost borders of the land of Canaan, to shelter himself there from the rage of his persecutors, sometimes to the country about Jordan, and when discovered there, then to the land of the Hermonites, or to a hill called Mizar, or the little hill; but, (1.) Wherever he went, he took his religion along with him; in all these places he remembered God, and lift up his heart to him, and kept his secret communion with him. This is the comfort of the banished, the wanderers, the travellers, of those that are strangers in a strange land, that wherever they are, there is a way open heaven-wards: *Undique ad cœlos tantundem est via.* (2.) Wherever he was, he retained his affection for the courts of God's house; from the land of Jordan, or from the top of the hills, he used to look a long look, a longing look, towards the place of the sanctuary, and with himself there. Distance and time could not make him forget that which his heart was so much upon, and which lay so near it.

2. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure against him, but comforts himself with the hopes of the return of his favour in due time.

(1.) He saw his troubles coming from God's wrath, and that discouraged him, *ver. 7.* *Deep calls unto deep*, one affliction comes upon the neck of another, as if it were called to hasten after it, and thy water-spouts give the signal, and sound the alarm of war. It may be meant of the terrors and tosses of his mind, under the apprehensions of God's anger. One frightful thought

summoned another, and made way for it, as is usual in melancholy people; he was overpowered and overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, like that of the old world, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Or, it is an allusion to a ship at sea, in a great storm, tossed by the roaring waves, which go over it, *Psal. cvii. 25.* Whatever waves and billows of affliction go over us at any time, we must call them God's waves, and his billows, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and may encourage ourselves to hope, that tho' we be threatned, we shall not be ruined; for the waves and billows are under a divine check, *The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of these many waters.* Let not good men think it strange, if they be exercised with many and various trials, and if they come thick upon them, God knows what he doth, and so shall they shortly. Jonah in the whale's belly made use of these words of David, *Jonah ii. 3.* (they are exactly the same in the original) and of him they are literally true, *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me*; for the book of psalms is contrived so as to reach every one's case.

(2.) He expected his deliverance to come from God's favour, *ver. 8.* *Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness.* Things are bad, but they shall not always be so; *non si male nunc olim sic erit.* After the storm there will come a calm, and the prospect of this supported him, when deep called unto deep. Observe, (1.) What he promised himself from God. *The Lord will command his loving kindness.* He eyes the favour of God, as the fountain of all the good he looked for, that is life, that is better than life; and with that, God will gather those from whom he has in a little wrath hid his face, *Isa. liv. 7, 8.* God's conferring of his favour, is called his commanding it, which intimates both the freeness of it, we cannot pretend to merit it, but it is bestowed in a way of sovereignty, he gives like a king; and the efficacy of it; he speaks his loving kindness, and makes us to hear it: speaks and it is done. He *commands deliverance*, *Psal. xlv. 4.* *commands the blessing*, *Psal. cxxxiii. 3.* as one having authority. By commanding his loving kindness, he commands down the waves and the billows, and they shall obey him. This he will do in the day time, for God's loving kindness will make day in the soul at any time: Tho' weeping has endured for a night, a long night, yet joy will come in the morning. (2.) What he promised for himself to God. If God command his loving kindness for him, he will meet it, and bid it welcome with his best affections and devotions. (1.) He will rejoice in God, *in the night his song shall be with me.* The mercies we receive in the day, we ought to return thanks for at night; when others are sleeping, we should be praising God. See *Psal. cxix. 62.* *At midnight will I rise to give thanks.* In silence and solitude, when we are retired from the hurries of the world, we must be pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of God's goodness. Or in the night of affliction, before the day dawns in which God commands his loving kindness; I will sing songs of praise in the prospect of it. Even in tribulation the saints can rejoice in hope of the glory of God; sing in hope, and praise in hope, *Rem. v. 2, 3.* It is God's prerogative to *give songs in the night*, *Job xxxv. 10.* (2.) He will seek to God in a constant dependence upon him. *My prayer shall be to the God of my life.* Our believing expectation of mercy must not supersede, but quicken our prayers for it. God is the God of our life, in whom we live and move, the author and giver of all our comforts, and therefore to whom should we apply ourselves by prayer but to him? And from him what good may not we expect? It would put life into our prayers, in them to eye God as the God of our life, for then it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we stand up to make request.

3. He complains of the insolence of his enemies, and yet comforts himself in God as his friend, *ver. 9, 10, 11.*

(1.) His complaint is, that his enemies oppressed and reproached him, and this made a great impression upon him. (1.) They oppressed him to that degree that he went mourning, from day to day, from place to place, *ver. 9.* He did not break out into indecent passions, tho' abused as never man was, but he silently wept out his grief, and went mourning; and for this we cannot blame him, it must needs grieve a man that truly loves his country, and seeks the good of it, to see himself run upon, and hardly used, as if he were an enemy to it: Yet David ought not from hence to conclude, that God had forgotten him, and cast him off, nor thus to expostulate with him, as if he did him as much wrong in suffering him to be trampled upon, as they did that trampled upon him. *Why go I mourning?* And *why hast thou forgotten me?* We may complain to God, but we are not allowed thus to complain of him. (2.) They reproached him so cuttingly, that it was a *sword in his bones*, *ver. 10.* He had mentioned before, what the reproach was that touched him thus to the quick, and here he repeats it, *They say daily unto me, Where is thy God?* A reproach which was therefore very grievous to him, both because it reflected dishonour upon God, and was intended to discourage his hope in God, which he had enough to do to keep up in any measure, and which was but too apt to fail of it self.

(2.) His

(2.) His comfort is, that God is his rock, *ver. 9.* A rock to build upon, a rock to take shelter in; the rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength, would be his rock, his strength in the inner man, both for doing and suffering. And to him he had access with confidence, to God his rock, he might say what he had to say, and be sure of a gracious audience. He therefore repeats what he had said, *ver. 5.* and concludes with it, *ver. 11.* *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* His griefs and fears were clamorous and troublesome, they were not silenced, tho' they were again and again answered; but here at length his faith came off a conqueror, and forced the enemies to quit the field. And he gains this victory. (1.) By repeating what he had before said; chiding himself, as before, for his dejections and disquietments, and encouraging himself to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay himself upon his God. Note, It may be of great use to us, to think our good thoughts over again, and if we do not gain our point with them at first, perhaps we may the second time; however, where the heart goes along with the words, it is no vain repetition. We have need to press the same thing over and over again upon our own hearts, and all little enough. (2.) By adding one word to it; there he hoped to praise God for the salvation that was in his countenance; here I will praise him, faith he, as the salvation of my countenance, from the present cloud that is upon it; if God smile upon me, that will make me look pleasant, look up, look forward, look round with pleasure; he adds, *And my God*, related to me, in covenant with me; all that he is, all that he has is mine, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise; this thought enabled him to triumph over all his griefs and fears; God's being with the saints in heaven, and being their God, is that which will wipe away all tears from their eyes, *Rev. xxi. 3, 4.*

P S A L M XLIII.

This psalm, it is likely, was penned upon the same occasion with the former, and having no title, may be looked upon as an appendix to it; the malady presently returning, he had immediate recourse to the same remedy, because he had entered it in his book, with a probatum est upon it. The second verse of this psalm is almost the very same with the ninth verse of the foregoing psalm, as the fifth of this is exactly the same with the eleventh of that. Christ himself, who had the Spirit without measure, when there was occasion, prayed a second and third time, saying the same words, Mat. xxvi. 44. In this psalm, (1.) He appeals to God concerning the injuries that were done him by his enemies, ver. 1, 2. (2.) He prays to God to restore to him the free enjoyment of public ordinances again, and promiseth to make a good improvement of them, ver. 3, 4. (3.) He endeavours to still the tumult of his own spirit, with a lively hope and confidence in God, ver. 5. which if we labour after, in singing this psalm, we sing with grace in our hearts.

JUDGE me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. 2. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy? 3. O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. 4. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, *who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

David here makes his application to God by faith and prayer, as his judge, his strength, his guide, his joy, his hope, with suitable affections and expressions.

1. As his judge, his righteous judge, whom he knew would judge him, and who (being conscious of his own integrity) he knew would judge for him, *ver. 1.* *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause.* There were those that impeached him, against them he is defendant, and from their courts, where he stood unjustly convicted and condemned, he appeals to the court of heaven, the supreme judicature; praying to have their judgment given against him reversed, and his innocence cleared. There were those that had injured him, against them he is plaintiff, and exhibits his complaint to him who is the avenger of wrong, praying for justice for himself, and upon them. Observe, (1.) Who his enemies were, with whom he had this struggle. Here was an ill body of men, whom he calls an ungodly, or unmerciful nation, and those that are unmerciful make it appear that they are ungodly; for those that have any fear or love of their master, will have compassion on their fellow servants. And here was one ill man, the head of them, a deceitful and unjust man; most probably

No. xli.

Saul, who not only shewed no kindness to David, but dealt most perfidiously and dishonestly with him. If Absalom was the man he meant, his character was no better. As long as there are such bad men out of hell, nations of them, it is not strange that good men, who are yet out of heaven, meet with hard and base treatment. Some think that David, by the spirit of prophecy, calculated this psalm for the use of the Jews in their captivity in Babylon, and that the Chaldeans are the ungodly nation here meant; and to them it was very applicable, but only as other like scriptures, none of which are of private interpretation. God might design it for their use, whether David did or no. (2.) What is his prayer with reference to them; *Judge me.* As to the quarrel God had with him for sin, he prays, *Enter not into judgment with me*, for then I shall be condemned; but as to the quarrel his enemies had with him, he prays, *Lord, judge me*, for I know that I shall be justified, *plead my cause against them, i. e.* take my part, and in thy providence appear on my behalf. He that has an honest cause, may expect that God will plead it. Plead my cause so as to deliver me from them, that they may not have their will against me. We must reckon our cause sufficiently pleaded, if we be delivered, tho' our enemies be not destroyed.

2. As his strength, his all-sufficient strength; so he eyes God, *ver. 2.* *Thou art the God of my strength, my God, my strength*, from whom all my strength is derived, in whom I strengthen myself, who hast many a time strengthened me, and without whom I am weak as water, and utterly unable either to do or suffer any thing for thee; David now went mourning, destitute of spiritual joys, yet he found God the God of his strength however; if we cannot comfort ourselves in God, we may stay ourselves upon him, and may have spiritual supports when we want spiritual suavities. David here pleads this with God; thou art the God on whom I depend as my strength, why then dost thou cast me off? This was a mistake; for God never cast off any that trusted in him, whatever melancholy apprehensions they may have of their own state. Thou art the God of my strength, why then is mine enemy too strong for me? and why go I mourning because of his oppressive power? It is hard to reconcile the mighty force of the church's enemies with the almighty power of the church's God; but the day will reconcile them, when all his enemies shall become his footstool.

3. As his guide, his faithful guide, *ver. 3.* *Lead me, bring me, to thy holy hill.* He prays (1.) That God by his providence would bring him back from his banishment, and open a way for him again to the free enjoyment of the privileges of God's sanctuary. His heart is upon the holy hill and the tabernacles, not upon his family-comforts, or his court-preferments or diversions; he could bear the want of these, but he is impatient to see God's tabernacles again; nothing so amiable in his eyes as those; thither he would fain be brought back. In order to this, he prays, *Send out thy light and thy truth, i. e.* Let me have this as a fruit of thy favour, which is light, and the performance of thy promise, which is truth; and we need desire no more to make us happy, than the good that flows from God's favour, and is included in his promise. That mercy, that truth, is enough, is all; and when we see these in God's providences, we see ourselves under a very safe conduct. Note, Those whom God leads, he leads to his holy hill, and to his tabernacles; those therefore who pretend to be led by the Spirit, and yet turn their backs upon instituted ordinances, certainly deceive themselves. (2.) That God by his grace would bring him into communion with himself, and prepare him for the vision and fruition of himself in the other world. Some of the Jewish writers by the light and truth here understand Messiah the prince, and Elias his forerunner; these are come; in answer to the prayers of the Old Testament; but we are still to pray for God's light and truth, *i. e.* the Spirit of light and truth, who supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence, to lead us into the mystery of godliness, and to guide us in the way to heaven. When God sends his light and truth into our hearts, those will guide us to the upper world in all our devotions, as well as in all our aims and expectations; and if we conscientiously follow that light and truth, they will certainly bring us to the holy hill above.

4. As his joy, his exceeding joy. If God guide him to his tabernacles, if he restore him to his former liberties, he knows very well what he has to do, *Then will I go unto the altar of God, ver. 4.* he will get as near as he can unto God, his exceeding joy. Note, (1.) Those that come to the tabernacles, should come to the altar; that come to ordinances, should qualify themselves to come, and then come to special ordinances, to those that are most affecting, and most binding. The nearer we come, the closer we cleave to God, the better. (2.) Those that come to the altar of God, must see to it that therein they come unto God, and draw near to him, with the heart, with a true heart: We come in vain to holy ordinances, if we do not in them come to the holy God. (3.) Those that come unto God, must come to him as their exceeding joy, not only as their future bliss, but as their present joy; and that not a common, but an exceeding joy, far exceeding all the joys of sense and time. The phrase in the original is very emphatical, unto God the gladness of my joy, or of my triumph. Whatever we rejoice or triumph in,

in, God must be the joy of it, all our joy in it must terminate in him, and must pass through the gift to the giver. (4.) When we come to God as our exceeding joy, our comforts in him must be the matter of our praises of him as God, and our God; *Upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.* David was an artist at the harp, 1 Sam. xvi. 16, 18. and with that in which he excelled he would praise God; for God is to be praised with the best we have; it is fit he should be so who is the best.

5. As his hope, his never-failing hope, ver. 5. Here, as before, David quarrels with himself for his dejections and despondencies, and owns he did ill to yield to them, and that he had no reason to do so: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* And then quiets himself in the believing expectation he had of giving glory to God: *Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him;* and of enjoying glory with God, he is *the health of my countenance, and my God.* This is what we cannot too much insist upon, for it is what we must live and die by.

P S A L M XLIV.

We are not told either who was the penman of this psalm, or when, and upon what occasion, it was penned; upon a melancholy occasion we are sure, not so much to the penman himself, then we could have found occasions enough for it in the history of David and his afflictions, but to the church of God in general; and therefore if we suppose it penned by David, yet we must attribute it purely to the spirit of prophecy, and must conclude that that spirit (whatever he had) had in view the captivity of Babylon, or the sufferings of the Jewish church under Antiochus; or rather, the afflicted state of the Christian church, in its early days, to which, ver. 22. is applied by the apostle, Rom. viii. 36. and indeed in all its days on earth, for it is its determined lot, that it must enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. And if we have any gospel psalms pointing at the privileges and comforts of christians, why should we not have one pointing at their trials and exercises? It is a psalm calculated for a day of fasting and humiliation, upon occasion of some publick calamity, either pressing or threatening. In it the church is taught (1.) To own with thankfulness, to the glory of God, the great things God had done for their fathers, ver. 1—8. (2.) To exhibit a memorial of their present calamitous estate, ver. 9—16. (3.) To file a protestation of their integrity and adherence to God notwithstanding, ver. 17—22. (4.) To lodge a petition at the throne of grace for succour and relief, ver. 22—26. In singing this psalm we ought to give God the praise of what he has formerly done for his people, to represent our own grievances, or sympathize with those parts of the church that are in distress, to engage ourselves, whatever happens, to cleave to God and duty, and then cheerfully to wait the event.

¶ To the chief musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

1. **W**E have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.* 2. *How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.* 3. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. 4. Thou art my king, O God, command deliverances for Jacob. 5. Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. 6. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. 7. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. 8. In God we boast all the day long: and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

Some observe that most of the psalms that are entitled, Maschil, psalms of instruction, are sorrowful psalms; for afflictions give instructions, and sorrow of spirit opens the ear to them; *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teacheest.*

In these verses, the church, tho' now trampled upon, calls to remembrance the days of her triumph, of her triumph in God, and over her enemies. This is very largely mentioned here, (1.) As an aggravation of the present distress. The yoke of servitude cannot but lie very heavy on the necks of those that used to wear the crown of victory; and the tokens of God's displeasure must needs be most grievous to those that have been long accustomed to the tokens of his favour. (2.) As an encouragement to hope that God would yet turn again their captivity, and return in mercy to them; and accordingly he mixes prayers and

comfortable expectations with his record of former mercies. Observe,

1. Their commemoration of the great things God had formerly done for them. In general, ver. 1. *Our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days.* Observe, (1.) The many operations of providence are here spoken of as one work. They have told us the work which thou didst, for there is a wonderful harmony and uniformity in all that God doth, and the many wheels make but one wheel, Ezek. x. 13. many works make but one work. (2.) It is a debt which every age owes to posterity; to keep an account of God's works of wonder, and transmit the knowledge of them to the next generation. Those that went before us told us what God did in their days, we are bound to tell those that come after us what he has done in our days, and let them do the like justice to those that shall succeed them; thus *shall one generation praise his works to another,* Psal. cxlv. 4. *the fathers to the children shall make known his truth,* Isa. xxxviii. 19. (3.) We must not only make mention of the work God has done in our own days, but must also acquaint ourselves and our children with what he did in the times of old, long before our own days; and of this we have in the scripture a sure word of history, as sure as the word of prophecy. (4.) Children must diligently attend to what their parents tell them of the wonderful works of God, and keep it in remembrance, as that which will be of great use to them. (5.) Former experiences of God's power and goodness are strong supports to faith, and powerful pleas in prayer under present calamities. See how Gideon insists upon it, Judg. vi. 13. *Where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of!* In particular, their fathers had told them,

(1.) How wonderfully God planted Israel in Canaan at first, ver. 2, 3. He drove out the natives, to make room for Israel, afflicted them, and cast them out, gave them as dust to Israel's sword, and as driven stubble to their bow. The many compleat victories which Israel obtained over the Canaanites, under the command of Joshua, were not to be attributed to themselves, nor could they challenge the glory of them; (1.) They were not owing to their own merit, but to God's favour and free grace; it was through *the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour to them; not for thy righteousness or the uprightness of thy heart doth God drive them out from before thee,* Deut. ix. 5, 6. but because God would *perform the oath which he swore unto their fathers,* Deut. vii. 8. The less praise this allows us, the more comfort it administers to us, that we may see all our successes and enlargements coming to us from the favour of God, and the light of his countenance. (2.) They were not owing to their own might, but to God's power engaged for them, without which all their own efforts and endeavours had been fruitless. It was not by their own sword that they got the land in possession, tho' they had great numbers of mighty men; nor did their own arm save them from being driven back by the Canaanites, and put to shame; but it was God's right hand and his arm. He fought for Israel, else they had fought in vain; it was through him that they did valiantly and victoriously: It was God that planted Israel in that good land, as the careful husbandman plants a tree, from which he promiseth himself fruit. See Psal. lxxx. 8. This is applicable to the planting of the Christian church in the world, by the preaching of the gospel; Paganism was wonderfully driven out, as the Canaanites, not all at once, but by little and little, not by any human policy or power, for God chose to do it by the weak and foolish things of the world, but by the wisdom and power of God; Christ by his Spirit went forth conquering and to conquer; and the remembrance of that is a great support and comfort to those that groan under the yoke of antichristian tyranny; for to the state of the church under the power of the New Testament Babylon, some think, (and particularly the learned Amyraldus) the complaints in the latter part of this psalm may very fitly be accommodated. He that by his power and goodness planted a church for himself in the world, will certainly support it by the same power and goodness, and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

(2.) How frequently he had given them success against their enemies that attempted to disturb them in the possession of that good land, ver. 7. *Thou hast, many a time, saved us from our enemies, and hast put to flight, and so put to shame, them that hated us;* witness the successes of the Judges against the nations that oppressed Israel. Many a time have the persecutors of the Christian church, and those that hate it, been put to shame by the power of truth, Acts vi. 10.

2. The good use they make of this record, and had formerly made of it, in consideration of the great things God had done for their fathers of old.

(1.) They had taken God for their sovereign Lord; had sworn allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection, ver. 4. *Thou art my King, O God.* He speaks in the name of the church, as Psal. lxxiv. 12. *Thou art my King of old;* God has as a king made laws for his church, provided for the peace and good order of it, judged for it, pleaded its cause, fought its battles, and protected it; it is his kingdom in the world, and ought to be subject to him, and to pay him tribute; or, the psalmist speaks for himself here; Lord, *Thou art my King,* Whither shall

shall I go but to thee with my petitions? The favour I ask is not for myself, but for thy church. Note, It is every one's duty to improve their personal interest at the throne of grace, for the publick welfare and prosperity of the people of God; as Moses, *If I have found grace in thy sight, guide thy people,* Exod. xxxiii. 13.

(2.) They had always applied themselves to him by prayer for deliverance, when at any time they were in distress, *Command deliverances for Jacob.* Observe, (1.) The enlargedness of their desire. They pray for deliverances, not one, but many, as many as they had need of, how many soever they were, a series of deliverances, a deliverance from every danger. (2.) The strength of their faith in the power of God; they do not say work deliverances, but command them, which notes his doing it easily and instantly, speak, and it is done; such was the faith of the centurion, *Matt. viii. 8. Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed;* and his doing it effectually; command it, as one having authority, whose command will be obeyed; *Where the word of a king is, there is power, much more the word of the King of kings.*

(3.) They had trusted and triumphed in him. As they owned that it was not their own sword and bow that had saved them, *ver. 3.* so neither did they trust to their own sword or bow to save them for the future, *ver. 6. I will not trust in my bow, nor in any of my military preparations, as if those would stand me in stead without God; no, through thee will we push down our enemies,* *ver. 5. i. e.* we will attempt it in thy strength, relying only upon that, and not upon the number or valour of our forces; and having thee on our side, we will not doubt of success in the attempt: *Through thy name, i. e.* by virtue of thy wisdom directing us, thy power strengthening us and working for us, and thy promise securing success to us, we shall, we will, *tread them under, that rise up against us.*

(4.) They had made him their joy and praise, *ver. 8. In God we have boasted, in him we do and will boast every day, and all the day long; when their enemies boasted of their strength and successes, as Sennacherib and Rabshakeh hector'd Hezekiah, they owned they had nothing to boast of in answer thereunto, but their relation to God, and their interest in him; and if he were for them, they could set all the world at defiance, Let him that glories, glory in the Lord, and let that for ever exclude all other boasting. Let those that trust in God make their boast in him, for they know whom they have trusted, let them boast in him all the day long, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted. But let them withal praise his name for ever; if they have the comfort of his name, let them give unto him the glory due to it.*

9. But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. 10. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves. 11. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat: and hast scattered us among the heathen. 12. Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price. 13. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. 14. Thou makest us a by-word among the heathen: a shaking of the head among the people. 15. My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me: 16. For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

The people of God here complain to him of the low and afflicted condition that they were in, under the prevailing power of their enemies and oppressors, which was the more grievous to them because they were now trampled upon, who had always been used in their struggles with their neighbours to win the day, and get the upper hand, and because those were now their oppressors, whom they had many a time triumphed over and made tributaries; and especially because they had boasted in their God, with great assurance that he would still protect and prosper them, which made the distress they were in, and the disgrace they were under, the more shameful. Let us see what the complaint is.

1. That they wanted the usual tokens of God's favour to them, and presence with them, *ver. 9. Thou hast cast off, i. e.* thou seemest to have cast us off, and our cause, and to have cast off thy wonted care of us, and concern for us, and so hast put us to shame, for we boasted of the constancy and perpetuity of thy favour; our armies go forth as usual, but they are put to flight, we gain no ground, but lose what we have gained, for thou goest not forth with them, for if thou didst, which way soever they turned they would prosper; but it is quite contrary. Note, God's people when they are cast down, are tempted to think themselves cast off, and forsaken of God; but it is a mistake. *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid, Rom. xi. 1.*

2. That they were put to the worst before their enemies in the field of battle, *ver. 10. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy, as Joshua complained when they met with a repulse at Ai, Josh. viii. 8. We are dispirited, and have lost the antient valour of Israelites; we flee, we fall before those that used to flee and fall before us, and then they that hate us have the plunder of our camp, and of our country; they spoil for themselves, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on. Attempts to shake off the Babylonish yoke have been ineffectual, and we have rather lost ground by them.*

3. That they were doomed to the sword and to captivity, *ver. 11. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat.* They make no more conscience of killing an Israelite than of killing a sheep; nay, like the butcher, they make a trade of it, they take a pleasure in it as a hungry man in his meat; and we are led with as much ease, and as little resistance as a lamb to the slaughter; many are slain, and the rest scattered among the heathen, continually insulted by their malice, or in danger of being infected by their iniquities. They looked upon themselves as bought and sold, and charged it upon God, *Thou sellest thy people, when they should have charged it upon their own sin, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, Isa. l. 1.* However, thus far was right, that they looked above the instruments of their trouble, and kept their eye upon God, as well knowing that their worst enemies had no power against them, *but what was given them from above;* they own it was God that delivered them into the hands of the ungodly, as that which is sold is delivered to the buyer. Thou sellest them for nought, and dost not increase in their price, so it may be read; dost not sell them by auction to those that will bid most for them, but in haste to those that will bid first for them; any one shall have them that will. Or, as we read it, *thou dost not increase thy wealth by their price;* intimating, that they could have suffered this contentedly, if they had been sure that it would have redounded to the glory of God, and that his interest might have been some way served by their sufferings; but it was quite contrary, Israel's disgrace turned to God's dishonour, so that he was so far from being a gainer in his glory by the sale of them, that it should seem he was greatly a loser by it, see *Isa. lii. 5. Ezek. xxxvi. 20.*

4. That they were loaded with contempt, and all possible ignominy put upon them. In this also they acknowledge God, *thou makest us a reproach, i. e.* thou bringest those calamities upon us, which occasion the reproach, and thou permittest their virulent tongues to smite us. They complain, (1.) That they were ridiculed and bantered, and were looked upon as the most contemptible people under the sun; their troubles were turned to their reproach, and upon the account of them they were derided. (2.) That their neighbours, and those about them, from whom they could not withdraw, were most abusive to them, *ver. 13.* (3.) That the heathen and the people that were strangers to the common-wealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise, made them a by-word, and shook the head at them, as triumphing in their fall, *ver. 14.* (4.) That the reproach was constant and incessant, *ver. 15. My confusion is continually before me.* The church in general, the psalmist in particular, was continually teased and vexed with the insults of the enemy; to those that are going down every one cries, Down with them. (5.) That it was very grievous, and in a manner overwhelmed him; *the shame of my face has covered me.* He blushed for sin, or rather for the dishonour done to God, and then it was a holy blushing. (6.) That it reflected upon God himself, the reproach which the enemy and the avenger cast upon them, was downright blasphemy against God, *ver. 16. and 2 Kings xix. 3.* Therefore, no doubt, but God would appear for them. As there is no trouble more grievous to a generous and ingenuous mind than reproach and calumny, so there is none more grievous to a holy gracious soul than blasphemy and dishonour done to God.

17. All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. 18. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way. 19. Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. 20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god: 21. Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. 22. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 23. Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD? arise, cast us not off for ever. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face? and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? 25. For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaveth unto the earth. 26. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies sake.

The people of God being greatly afflicted and oppressed, here apply themselves to him, (whither else should they go?)

1. By way of appeal, concerning their integrity, which he only is an infallible judge of, and which he will certainly be the reward of.

Two things they call God to witness to.

1. That tho' they suffered these hard things, yet they kept close to God, and to their duty, *ver. 17. All this is come upon us*, and it is as bad, perhaps, as bad can be, *yet have we not forgotten thee*; nor cast off the thoughts of thee, nor deserted the worship of thee, for tho' we cannot deny but that we have dealt foolishly, yet we have not dealt foolishly in thy covenant, so as to cast thee off, and take to other gods. Tho' idolaters were our conquerors, we did not therefore entertain any more favourable thoughts of their idols and idolatries; tho' thou hast seemed to forsake us, and withdraw from us, yet we have not therefore forsaken thee. The trouble they had been long in, was very great; we have been *fore broken in the place of dragons*, i. e. among men as fierce, and furious, and cruel as dragons; we have been covered with the shadow of death, i. e. we have been under deep melancholy, and apprehensive of nothing but death; we have been wrapped up in obscurity, and buried alive; and thou hast thus broken us, thou hast thus covered us, *ver. 19. yet we have not harboured any hard thoughts of thee, nor meditated a retreat from thy service*; tho' thou hast slain us, we have continued to trust in thee; *our heart is not turned back*, we have not secretly withdrawn our affections from thee, neither have our steps, either in our religious worship, or in our conversation, *declined from thy way*, *ver. 18. the way which thou hast appointed us to walk in*. When the heart turns back, the steps will soon decline; for it is the evil heart of unbelief that inclines us to depart from God. Note, We may the better bear our troubles, how pressing soever, if in them we still hold fast our integrity. While our troubles do not drive us from our duty to God, we should not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God; for he will not leave us, if we do not leave him.

For the proof of their integrity, they take God's omniscience to witness, which is as much the comfort of the upright in heart, as it is the terror of hypocrites, *ver. 20, 21. If we have forgotten the name of our God*, under pretence that he had forgotten us, or in our distress had stretched out our hands to a strange god, as more likely to help us, *shall not God search this out?* Shall he not know it more fully and distinctly, than we know that which we have with the greatest care and diligence searched out! Shall he not judge it, and call us to an account for it? Forgetting God was a heart-sin, and stretching out the hand to a strange god was often a secret sin, *Ezek. viii. 12. But heart-sins and secret-sins are known to God, and must be reckoned for; for he knows the secrets of the heart*, and therefore is an infallible judge of the words and actions.

(2.) That therefore they suffered these hard things, because they kept close to God and to their duty, *ver. 22. It is for thy sake that we are killed all the day long*, because we stand related to thee, are called by thy name, call upon thy name, and will not worship other gods. In this the spirit of prophecy had reference to those who suffered, even unto death, for the testimony of Christ, to whom it is applied, *Rom. viii. 36. So many were killed and put to such lingering deaths, that they were in the killing all the day long; so universally was this practised, that when a man became a christian, he reckoned himself as a sheep appointed for the slaughter*.

2. By way of petition, with references to their present distress, that God would in his own due time work deliverance for them. Their request is very importunate, *Awake, arise*, *ver. 23. Arise for our help, redeem us*, *ver. 26. come speedily and powerfully to our relief*, *Psal. lxxx. 2. Stir up thy strength, and come and save us*. They complained, *ver. 12. that God had sold them; here they pray, ver. 26. that God would redeem them, for there is no appealing from God, but by appealing to him; if he sell us, it is not any one else that can redeem us; the same hand that tears must heal, that finites must bind up*, *Hos. vi. 1. They complained, ver. 9. Thou hast cast us off; but here they pray, ver. 23. Cast us not off for ever. Let us not be finally forsaken of God. The expostulations are very moving, why sleepest thou?* *ver. 23. He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when he doth not presently appear for the deliverance of his people, they are tempted to think he sleeps: The expression is figurative, as Psal. lxxviii. 65. Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep; but it was applicable to Christ in the latter, Matt. viii. 24. he was asleep when the disciples were in a storm, and they awoke him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish, wherefore hidest thou thy face, that we may not see thee and the light of thy countenance?* Or, that thou mayst not see us and our distresses? Thou forgettest our affliction and our oppression, for it still continues, and we see no way open for our deliverance. And lastly, The pleas are very proper, not their own merit and righteousness, tho' they had the testimony of their consciences concerning their integrity, but they plead the poor sinners plea's, (1.) Their own misery, which made them the proper object of the divine compassion, *ver. 25. Our soul is bowed down to the*

dust, under prevailing grief and fear, we are become as creeping things, the most despicable animals, *our belly cleaveth unto the earth*, we cannot lift up ourselves, neither revive our own drooping spirits, nor recover ourselves out of our low and sad condition, and we lie exposed to be trodden on by every insulting foe. (2.) God's mercy; O redeem us for thy mercies sake, we depend upon the goodness of thy nature, which is the glory of thy name, *Exod. xxiv. 6. and upon those sure mercies of David*, which are conveyed by the covenant to all his spiritual seed.

P S A L M XLV.

This psalm is an illustrious prophecy of Messiah the prince, it is all over gospel, and points at him only, as a bridegroom espousing the church to himself, and as a king ruling in it, and ruling for it: And it is probable our Saviour has reference to this psalm, when he compares the kingdom of heaven, more than once, to a nuptial solemnity, the solemnity of a royal nuptial, *Matt. xxii. 2.—xxv. 1. We have no reason to think it has any reference to Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; if I thought it had reference to any other than the mystical marriage between Christ and his church, I would rather apply it to some of David's marriages, because he was a man of war, such a one as the bridegroom here is described to be, which Solomon was not: But I take it to be purely and only meant of Jesus Christ; of him speaketh the prophet this, of him and of no other man; and to him, ver. 6, 7. is applied in the New Testament, Heb. i. 8. nor can it be understood of any other. The preface speaks the excellency of the song, ver. 1. The psalm speaks, (1.) Of the royal bridegroom who is Christ. (1.) The transcendent excellency of his person, ver. 2. (2.) The glory of his victories, ver. 3—5. (3.) The righteousness of his government, ver. 6, 7. (4.) The splendor of his court, ver. 8, 9. (2.) Of the royal bride, which is the church. (1.) Her consent gained, ver. 10, 11. (2.) The nuptial solemnized, ver. 12—15. (3.) The issue of this marriage, ver. 16, 17. In singing this psalm, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of Christ, with an entire submission to, and satisfaction in, his government, and earnest desire of the enlarging and perpetuating of his church in the world.*

¶ To the chief musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A song of loves.

1. MY heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. 2. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. 3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty: with thy glory and thy majesty. 4. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. 5. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the kings enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

Some make Shoshannim in the title, to signify an instrument of six strings; others take it in its primitive signification for lilies or roses, which, probably, were strewed, with other flowers, at nuptial solemnities; and then it is easily applicable to Christ, who calls himself the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, *Cant. ii. 1. It is a song of loves, concerning the holy love that is between Christ and his church. It is a song of the well-beloved, the virgins, the companions of the bride, ver. 14. prepared to be sung by them; the virgin-company that attend the Lamb on mount Sion, are said to sing a new song, Rev. xiv. 3, 4.*

The preface, *ver. 1. speaks, (1.) The dignity of the subject. It is a good matter, and it is pity such a moving art as poetry should ever be employed about a bad matter; It is touching the King, king Jesus, and his kingdom and government. Note, Those that speak of Christ, speak of a good matter, no subject so noble, so copious, so fruitful, so profitable, and so well-becoming us; it is a shame that this good matter is not more the matter of our discourse. (2.) The excellency of the management; this song was a confession with the mouth of faith in the heart, concerning Christ and his church. 1. The matter was well-digested, as it well-deserved. My heart is inditing it; which, perhaps, is meant of that spirit of prophecy that dictated the psalm to David; that Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, 1 Pet. i. 11. But it is applicable to his devout meditations and affections in his heart, out of the abundance of which his mouth spake. Things concerning Christ ought to be thought of by us with all possible seriousness, with fixedness of thought, and a fire of holy love; especially when we are to speak of those things.*

things. We then speak best of Christ and divine things, when we speak from the heart, that which has warmed and affected us; and we should never be rash in speaking of the things of Christ, but weigh well before-hand what we have to say, lest we speak amiss. See *Ecc. v. 2.* 2. It was well expressed; *I will speak of the things which I have made.* He would express himself, (1.) With all possible clearness, as one that did himself understand, and was affected with the things he spoke of. Not, I will speak the things I have heard from others, that is speaking by rote; but the things which I have myself studied. Note, What God has wrought in our souls, as well as what he has wrought for them, we must declare to others. *Psal. lxxvi. 16.* (2.) With all possible cheerfulness, freedom, and fluency; *My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer,* guided by my heart in every word, as the pen is by the hand. We call the prophets the penmen of scripture, whereas really they were but the pen. The tongue of the most subtle disputant, and the most eloquent orator, is but the pen with which God writes what he pleaseth. Why should we quarrel with the pen, if bitter things be written against us; or idolize the pen, if it write in our favours? David not only spoke what he thought of Christ, but wrote it, that it might spread the farther, and last the longer. His tongue was as the pen of a ready writer, that lets nothing slip. When the heart is inditing a good matter, it is pity but the tongue should be as *the pen of a ready writer,* to leave it upon record.

In these verses, the Lord Jesus is presented; 1. As most beautiful and amiable in himself. It is a marriage-song, and therefore the transcendent excellencies of Christ are represented by the beauty of the royal bridegroom, *ver. 2. Thou art fairer than the children of men,* than any of them. He proposed, *ver. 1. to speak of the king,* but immediately directs his speech to him. They that have an admiration and affection for Christ, love to go to him and tell him so. Thus we must profess our faith that we see his beauty, and our love that we are pleased with it. *Thou art fair, thou art fairer than the children of men.* Note, Jesus Christ is in himself, and in the eyes of all believers, more amiable and lovely than the children of men. The beauties of the Lord Jesus, as God, as Mediator, far surpass those of the human nature in general, and those which the most amiable and excellent of the children of men are endowed with; there is more in Christ to engage our love, than there is or can be in any creature. Our beloved is more than another beloved. The beauties of this lower world and its charms, are in danger of drawing away our hearts from Christ, and therefore we are concerned to understand how much he excelleth them all, and how much more worthy he is of our love.

2. As the great favourite of heaven. He is fairer than the children of men, for God has done more for him than for any of the children of men, and all his kindness to the children of men is for his sake, and passeth through his hands, through his mouth. (1.) He hath grace, and he has it for us; *grace is poured into thy lips.* By his word, his promise, his gospel, the *good will of God* is made known to us, and the *good work of God* is begun and carried on in us. He received all grace from God, all the endowments that were requisite to qualify him for his work and office as Mediator, that from his fulness we might receive, *John i. 16.* It was not only poured into his heart for his own strength and encouragement, but poured into his lips, that by the words of his mouth in general, and the kisses of his mouth to particular believers, he might communicate both holiness and comfort. From this grace poured into his lips proceeded those gracious words which all admired, *Luke iv. 22.* The gospel of grace is poured into his lips, for it *began to be spoken by the Lord,* and from him we receive it, he hath the words of eternal life. *The spirit of prophecy is put into thy lips:* So the Chaldee. (2.) He hath the blessing, and he has it for us. Therefore, because thou art the great trustee of divine grace, for the use and benefit of the children of men, *therefore God has blessed thee for ever, i. e.* has made thee an everlasting blessing, so as that in thee all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Where God gives his grace, he will give his blessing, we are blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, *Eph. i. 3.*

3. As victorious over all his enemies. The royal bridegroom is a man of war, and his nuptials do not excuse him from the field of battle, (as was allowed by the law, *Deut. xxiv. 5.*) nay, they bring him to the field of battle, for he is to rescue his spouse by dint of sword out of her captivity; to conquer her, and to conquer for her, and then to marry her. Now we have here,

1. His preparations for war, *ver. 3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty.* The word of God is the sword of the Spirit: by the promises of that word, and the grace contained in those promises, souls are made willing to submit to Jesus Christ, and become his loyal subjects: And by the threatnings of that word, and the judgments executed according to them, those that stand it out against Christ will in due time be brought down, and ruined. By the gospel of Christ many Jews and Gentiles were converted, and at length the Jewish nation was destroyed, according to the predictions of it, for their implacable enmity to it; and paganism was quite abolished. The sword here girt on Christ's thigh, is the same which is said to *proceed out of his mouth,* *Rev. xix. 15.* When the gospel was

No. xli.

sent forth to be preached to all nations, then our Redeemer girt his sword upon his thigh.

2. His expedition to this holy war. *He goes forth with his glory and his majesty,* as a great king takes the field, with abundance of pomp and magnificence. His sword, his glory, and majesty, in his gospel he appears transcendently great and excellent, bright and blessed, in the honour and majesty which the Father has laid upon him. Christ, both in his person and in his gospel, had nothing of external glory or majesty, nothing to charm men, for he had no form nor comeliness, nothing to awe men, for he *took upon him the form of a servant*; but it was all spiritual glory, spiritual majesty. There is so much grace, and therefore glory, in that word, *He that believes shall be saved*; so much terror, and therefore majesty, in that word, *He that believes not shall be damned*; that we may well say, in the chariot of that gospel, which these words are the sum of, the Redeemer rides forth in glory and majesty. *In thy majesty ride prosperously,* *ver. 4. Prosper thou; ride thou;* this speaks the promise of his Father, that he should prosper, according to *the good pleasure of the Lord,* that he should *divide the spoil with the strong,* in recompence of his sufferings. Those cannot but prosper, to whom God faith, *prosper,* *Isa. lii. 10, 11, 12.* And it speaks the good wishes of his friends, praying that he may prosper in the conversion of souls to him, and the destruction of all the powers of darkness that rebel against him. *Thy kingdom come. Go on and prosper.*

3. The glorious cause in which he is engaged, *because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness,* which were in a manner sunk and lost among men, and which Christ came to retrieve and rescue. (1.) The gospel itself is *truth, meekness, and righteousness*; it commands by the power of truth and righteousness, for christianity has these incontestibly on its side, and yet it is to be promoted by meekness and gentleness, *1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. 2 Tim. ii. 25.* (2.) Christ appears in it, in his *truth, meekness, and righteousness,* and these are his glory and majesty, and because of these he shall prosper. Men are brought to believe on him because he is truth, to learn of him because he is meek, (*Matt. xi. 29.*) the gentleness of Christ is a thing of mighty force, *2 Cor. x. 1.* and to submit to him because he is righteous, and rules with equity. (3.) The gospel, as far it prevails with men, sets up in their hearts *truth, meekness, and righteousness*, rectifies their mistakes by the light of truth, controls their passions by the power of meekness, and governs their hearts and lives by the laws of righteousness. Christ came, by setting up his kingdom among men, to restore these glories to a degenerate world, and to maintain the cause of these just and rightful rulers under him, that, by error, malice, and iniquity, had been deposed.

4. The success of his expedition. *Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things, i. e.* Thou shalt experience a wonderful divine power going along with thy gospel to make it victorious; and the effects of it will be terrible things. (1.) In order to the conversion and reduction of souls to him, there are terrible things to be done; the heart must be pricked, conscience must be startled, and the terrors of the Lord must make way for his consolations: this is done by the right hand of Christ. The Comforter shall continue, *John xvi. 8.* (2.) In the conquest of the gates of hell, and its supporters, in the destruction of Judaism, and Paganism, terrible things will be done, which will make *mens hearts fail them for fear,* *Luke xxi. 26.* and great men, and chief captains call to the *rocks and mountains to fall on them,* *Rev. vi. 15.* The next verse describes these terrible things, *ver. 5. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies.* (1.) Those that were by nature enemies are thus wounded, in order to their being reduced, and reconciled. Convictions are like the arrows of the bow, which are sharp in the heart on which they fasten, and bring people to fall under Christ, in subjection to his laws and government. They that thus fall on this stone, shall be broken, *Matt. xxi. 44.* (2.) Those that persist in their enmity, are thus wounded, in order to their being ruined. The arrows of God's terrors are sharp in their hearts, whereby they shall fall under him, so as to be made his foot-stool, *Psal. cx. 1.* Those that would not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him, *Luke xix. 27.* that would not submit to his golden sceptre, shall be broken to pieces by his iron rod.

6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 8. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. 9. Kings daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

We have here, the royal bridegroom filling his throne with judgment, and keeping his court with splendor.

1. He here fills his throne with judgment. It is God the Father that faith to the Son here, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*; as appears, *Heb. i. 8, 9.* where this is quoted to prove that he is God, and has a *more excellent name than the angels*. The Mediator is God, else he had neither been able to do the Mediator's work, nor fit to wear the Mediator's crown. Concerning his government, observe,

(1.) The eternity of it: it is *for ever and ever*. It shall continue on earth throughout all the ages of time, in despite of all the opposition of the gates of hell; and in the blessed fruits and consequences of it, it shall last as long as the days of heaven, and run parallel with the line of eternity itself. And perhaps, even then the glory of the Redeemer, and the blessedness of the redeemed, shall be in a continual infinite progression, for it is promised, that not only of his government, but of *the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end*, *Isa. iv. 7.* even then when the kingdom shall be *delivered up to God, even the Father*, *1 Cor. xv. 24.* the throne of the Redeemer will continue.

(2.) The equity of it; *The sceptre of thy kingdom*, i. e. the administration of thy government is right, exactly according to the eternal counsel and will of God, which is the eternal rule and reason of good and evil; and whatever Christ doth, he doth none of his subjects any wrong, but rights those that do suffer wrong, *He loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness*, ver. 7. He himself loves to do righteousness and hates to do wickedness; and he loves those that do righteousness, and hates those that do wickedness; by the holiness of his life, the merit of his death, and the great design of his gospel, he has made it to appear that he loves righteousness, for by his example, his satisfaction, and his precepts, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness; and that he hates wickedness, for never did God's hatred of sin appear so as it did in the sufferings of Christ.

(3.) The establishment and elevation of it. *Therefore God, even thy God*, (Christ, as Mediator, called God his God, *John xx. 17.* as commissioned by him, and the head of those that are taken into covenant with him) he has *anointed thee with the oil of gladness*; therefore, i. e. (1.) In order to this righteous government of thine, God has given thee his Spirit, that divine unction, to qualify thee for thine undertaking, *Isa. lxi. 1.* *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me.* What God called him to, he fitted him for, *Isa. xi. 2.* The Spirit is called the oil of gladness, because of the delight wherein Christ was filled in carrying on his undertaking. He was anointed with the Spirit *above all his fellows*, i. e. above all those that were anointed, whether priests or kings. (2.) In recompence of what thou hast done, and suffered for the advancement of righteousness, and the destruction of sin, God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness, i. e. has brought thee to all the honours, and all the joys of thine exalted state; *because he humbled himself, God has highly exalted him*, *Phil. ii. 8, 9.* His anointing him, notes the power and glory to which he is exalted; he is invested in all the dignities and authorities of the Messiah; and his anointing him with the oil of gladness, notes the joy that was set before him (so his exaltation is expressed, *Heb. xii. 2.*) both in the light of his *Father's countenance*, *Acts ii. 28.* and in the success of his undertaking, which he shall see and be satisfied, *Isa. liii. 11.* This he is anointed with *above all his fellows*, i. e. above all believers, who are his brethren, and who partake of the anointing; but they by measure, he without measure. But the apostle brings it to prove his preeminence above the angels, *Heb. i. 4, 9.* The salvation of sinners is the joy of angels, *Luke xv. 10.* but much more of the Son.

2. He keeps his court with splendor and magnificence.

(1.) His robes of state, wherein he appears, are taken notice of, not for their pomp, which might strike an awe upon the spectator, but their pleasantness, and the gratefulness of the odours with which they were perfumed, ver. 8. *They smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia*, compounding the oil of gladness, with which he and his garments were anointed; these were some of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil which God appointed, the like to which was not to be made up for any common use, *Exod. xxx. 23, 24.* which was typical of the unction of the Spirit, which Christ, the great high-priest of our profession, received, and to which therefore there seems here to be a reference. It is the favour of these good ointments, his graces and comforts, that draws souls to him, *Cant. i. 3, 4.* and makes him *precious to believers*, *1 Pet. ii. 7.*

(2.) His royal palaces are said to be ivory ones, such as were then reckoned most magnificent. We read of an ivory house that Ahab made, *1 Kings xxi. 39.* The mansions of light above are the ivory palaces, whence all the joys both of Christ and believers come, and where they will be for ever in perfection; for by them he is made glad, and all that are his with him; for they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.

(3.) The beauties of his court shine very bright. In publick appearances at court, when the pomp of it is shewed, nothing is supposed to contribute so much to it as the splendor of the ladies, which is alluded to here, ver. 9.

(1.) Particular believers are here compared to the ladies at court, richly dressed, in honour of the sovereign. *Kings daughters are among the honourable women*, whose looks and mien, and

ornaments; we may suppose by the height of their extraction, to excel all others. All true believers are born from above; they are the children of the King of kings, these attend the throne of the Lord Jesus daily with their prayers and praises, which is really their honour, and he is pleased to reckon it his. The numbering of kings daughters among his honourable women, or maids of honour, intimates that the kings, whose daughters they were, should be tributaries to him, and dependents on him, and would therefore think it a preferment to their daughters to attend him.

(2.) The church in general, constituted of these particular believers, is here compared to the queen herself; the queen-consort, which by an everlasting covenant he hath betrothed to himself; she stands *at his right hand*, near to him, and receiving honour from him, in the richest array, *in gold of Ophir*, in robes woven with gold thread, or with a gold chain, and other ornaments of gold. This is *the bride, the Lamb's wife*, whose graces, that are her ornaments, are compared to *fine linen, clean and white*, *Rev. xix. 8.* for their purity; here to have *gold of Ophir*, for their costliness; for as we owe our redemption, so we owe our adorning, not to corruptible things, but to the *precious blood of the Son of God*.

10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ears; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. 11. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him. 12. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour. 13. The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. 14. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. 15. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. 16. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. 17. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

This latter part of the psalm is addressed to the royal bride, standing on the right-hand of the royal bridegroom; God that said to the Son, *Thy throne is for ever and ever*, said this to the church, whom, upon the account of her espousals to the Son, he here calls his daughter.

1. He tells her of the duties expected from her, which ought to be considered by all those that come into relation to the Lord Jesus; hearken therefore, and consider this, and *incline thine ear*, i. e. submit to those conditions of thine espousals, and bring thy will to comply with them. This is the method of profiting by the word of God; *He that has ears let him hear*, let him hearken diligently: he that hearkens let him consider and weigh it duly: he that considers let him incline, and yield to the force of what is laid before him. And what is it that is here required?

(1.) She must renounce all others; *Forget thine own people and thy father's house*, according to the law of marriage, retain not the affection thou hast had for them, nor covet to return to them again; banish all such remembrance, not only of thy people, that were dear to thee, but of thy father's house that were dearer, as may incline thee to look back, as Lot's wife to Sodom. When Abraham in obedience to God's call had quitted his native soil, he was not so much as *mindful of the country from whence he came out*. This shews (1.) How necessary it was for those who were converted from Judaism or Paganism to the faith of Christ, wholly to cast out the old leaven, and not to bring into their Christian profession, either the Jewish ceremonies, or the heathen idolatries, for these would make such a mungrel religion in Christianity as the Samaritans had. (2.) How necessary it is for us all when we give up our names to Jesus Christ, to hate father and mother, and all that is dear to us in this world, in comparison, i. e. to love them less than Christ and his honour, and our interest in him, *Luke xiv. 26.*

And here is very good encouragement given to the royal bride, thus entirely to break off from her former alliances, *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty*; which intimates, that the mixing of her old rites and customs, whether Jewish or Gentile, with her religion, would blemish her beauty, and would be in danger of losing her interest in the affections of the royal bridegroom; but if she entirely conform to his will, he would delight in her, the beauty of holiness, both on the church, and on particular believers, is in the sight of Christ of great price, and very amiable. Where that is, he saith, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it*. Among the golden candlesticks he walks with pleasure, *Rev. ii. 1.*

(2.) She must reverence him, must love, honour, and obey him; *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*. The church is to be

be subject to Christ, as the wife to the husband, *Eph. v. 24.* to call him Lord, as Sarah called Abraham, and to obey him, *1 Pet. iii. 6.* and so not only to submit to his government, but to give him divine honours; we must worship him as God, and our Lord; for this is the will of God that *all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; nay, in so doing, it is reckoned that they honour the Father: if we confess that Christ is Lord, and pay our homage to him accordingly, it is *to the glory of God the Father*, *Phil. ii. 11.*

2. He tells her of the honours designed for her.

1. Great court should be made to her, and rich presents brought her, *ver. 12.* *The daughter of Tyre*, a rich and splendid city, the daughter of the king of Tyre shall be there with a gift; every royal family round about shall send a branch as a representative of the whole, to seek thy favour, and to make an interest in thee; *even the rich among the people*, whose wealth might be thought to discharge them from dependence at court, yet they shall intreat thy favour, for his sake, to whom thou art espoused, that by thee they may make him their friend; the Jews, the pretending Jews, who are rich to a proverb (as rich as a Jew) shall come and worship before the church's feet in the Philadelphian period, and shall know that *Christ has loved her*, *Rev. iii. 9.* When the Gentiles being converted to the faith of Christ, join themselves to the church, they then *come with a gift*, *2 Cor. viii. 5.* *Rom. xv. 16.* When with themselves they devote all they have to the honour of Christ, and the service of his kingdom, they then *come with a gift*.

2. She shall be very splendid and highly esteemed in the eyes of all, (1.) For her personal qualifications, the endowments of her mind, which every one shall admire, *ver. 13.* *The king's daughter is all glorious within.* Note, The glory of the church is spiritual glory, and that is indeed all glory; it is the glory of the soul, and that is the man; it is glory in God's sight, and it is an earnest of eternal glory. The glory of the saints falls not within the ken of a carnal eye; as their life, so their glory is hid with Christ in God, neither can the natural man know it, for it is spiritually discerned; but those who do so discern it, highly value it. Let us see here what is that true glory which we should be ambitious of, not that which *makes a fair shew in the flesh*, but which is in the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *1 Pet. iii. 4.* *Whose praise is not of men but of God*, *Rom. ii. 29.* (2.) For her rich apparel; tho' all her glory is within, that for which she is truly valuable, yet her clothing also is of wrought gold; the conversation of christians, in which they appear in the world must be enriched with good works, not gay and gaudy ones, like paint and flourish, but substantially good, like gold; and it must be accurate and exact, like wrought gold, which is worked with a great deal of care and caution.

3. Her nuptials shall be celebrated with a great deal of honour and joy, *ver. 14, 15.* *She shall be brought to the king*, as the Lord God brought the woman to the man, *Gen. ii. 22.* which was a type of this mystical marriage between Christ and his church. None are brought to Christ but whom the Father brings, and he has undertaken to do it, so brought *to the king*, *ver. 14.* as to *enter into the king's palace*, *ver. 15.* Which intimates a two-fold bringing of the spouse to Christ. (1.) In the conversion of souls to Christ; then they are espoused to him, privately contracted, as chaste virgins, *2 Cor. xi. 2.* *Rom. vii. 4.* (2.) In the completing of the mystical body, and the glorification of all the saints at the end of time. Then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be made compleatly ready, when all that belong to the election of grace shall be called in, and called home, and all gathered together to Christ, *2 Thess. ii. 1.* Then is the marriage of the Lamb come, *Rev. xix. 7.—xxi. 2.* and the virgins go forth to meet the bridegroom, *Matt. xxv. 1.* Then they shall enter into the king's palace, into the heavenly mansions, to be ever with the Lord. In both these espousals observe to the honour of the royal bride; (1.) Her wedding-clothes, *raiment of needle-work*, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of the Spirit; both curiously wrought by divine wisdom. (2.) Her bride-maids, the virgins her companions, the wise virgins that have oil in their vessels, as well as in their lamps, those that being joined to the church cleave to it, and follow it, these shall go in to the marriage. (3.) The mirth with which the nuptials will be celebrated; *with gladness and rejoicing shall she be brought*; when the prodigal is brought home to his father, *it is meet that we should make merry and be glad*, *Luke xv. 32.* and when the marriage of the Lamb is come; *let us be glad and rejoice*, *Rev. xix. 7.* For the day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart, *Cant. iii. 11.*

4. The progeny of this marriage shall be illustrious, *ver. 16.* *Instead of thy fathers, shall be thy children.* Instead of the Old Testament church, the oeconomy of which was waxen old, and ready to *vanish away*, *Heb. viii. 13.* as the fathers that are going off, there shall be a New Testament church, a Gentile church, that shall be grafted into the same olive, and partake of its root and fatness, *Rom. xi. 17.* more and more eminent shall be the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, *Isa. liv. 1.* This promise to Christ is of the same import with that, *Isa. liv. 10.* *He shall see his seed*; and these shall be made princes in all the earth, i. e. there shall be some of all nations

brought into subjection to Christ, and so made princes, *made to our God kings and priests*, *Rev. i. 6.* Or it may intimate, that there should be a much greater number of Christian kings than ever there was of Jewish kings; those in Canaan only, these in all the earth; nursing fathers, and nursing mothers to the church, which shall suck the breasts of kings. They are princes of Christ's making, for by him kings reign, and princes decree justice.

5. The praise of this marriage shall be perpetual, in the praises of the royal bridegroom, *ver. 18.* *I will make thy name to be remembered.* His Father has given him a name above every name, and here promiseth to make it perpetual, by keeping up a succession of ministers and christians in every age that should bear up his name; which shall thus endure for ever, *Psal. lxxii. 17.* by being remembered in all the generations of time, for the entail of christianity shall not be cut off. Therefore, because they shall remember thee in all generations, they shall praise thee for ever and ever. They that help to support the honour of Christ on earth, shall in heaven see his glory, and share in it, and be for ever praising him. In the believing hope of our everlasting happiness in the other world, let us always keep up the remembrance of Christ, as our only way thither, in our generation; and in assurance of the perpetuating of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, let us transmit the remembrance of him to succeeding generations; that his name may endure for ever, and be as the days of heaven.

P S A L M XLVI.

This psalm encourageth us to hope and trust in God, and his power and providence, and gracious presence with his church in the worst of times, and directs us to give him the glory of what he has done for us, and what he will do: probably it was penned upon occasion of David's victories over the neighbour nations, 2 Sam. viii. and the rest which God gave him from all his enemies round about. We are here taught (1.) To take comfort in God, when things look very black and threatening, ver. 1—5. (2.) To mention to his praise the great things he has wrought for his church against its enemies, ver. 6—9. (3.) To assure ourselves that God who hath glorified his own name, will glorify it yet again, and to comfort ourselves with that, ver. 10, 11. We may in singing it apply it either to our spiritual enemies, and the encouragement we have to hope that through Christ we shall be more than conquerors over them; or, to the publick enemies of Christ's kingdom in the world, and their threatening insults, endeavouring to preserve a holy security and serenity of mind, when they seem most formidable. It is said of Luther, that when he heard any discouraging news, he would say, Come let us sing the forty sixth psalm.

¶ To the chief musician for the sons of Korah;
A song upon Alamoth.

1. **G**OD is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. 3. Though the waters thereof rore, and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. 5. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

The psalmist here teacheth us by his own example,

1. To triumph in God, and his relation to us, and presence with us, especially when we have had some fresh experiences of his appearing on our behalf, *ver. 1.* *God is our refuge and strength*; we have found him so, he has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our refuge, to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe, and think ourselves so; secure upon good ground, *Prov. xviii. 10.* Are we oppressed by troubles? Have we work to do, and enemies to grapple with? God is our strength, to bear us up under our burthens, to fit us for all our services and sufferings; who will by his grace put strength into us, and on whom we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a help, to do all that for us which we need, a present help, a help found, so the word is, *i. e.* One whom we have found to be so, a help on which we may write *probatum est*, as Christ is called a *tried stone*, *Isa. xxviii. 16.* Or, a help at hand, that is never to seek, but is always ready to be found of us: Or, a help sufficient, a help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present help, we cannot desire a better help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.

2. To triumph over the greatest dangers. *God is our strength and our help*, a God all-sufficient to us, *Therefore will not we fear.* Those that with a holy reverence fear God, need not with any amazement to be afraid of the power of hell or earth; *If God*

be for us, who can be against us to do us any harm? It is our duty, it is our privilege, to be thus fearless; it is an evidence of a clear conscience, of an honest heart, and of a lively faith in God, and his providence and promise; *We will not fear, tho' the earth be removed, tho' all our creature-confidences fail us, and sink us; nay, tho' that which should support us threaten to swallow us up, as the earth did Korah, for whose sons this psalm was penned, and some think by them, yet while we keep close to God, and have him for us, we will not fear, for we have no cause to fear; Et si fractus illabatur orbis, Impavidum ferient ruinae.* Hor. Observe here,

1. How threatening the danger is. We will suppose the earth to be removed, and thrown into the sea, even the mountains, the strongest and firmest parts of the earth to lie buried in the unfathomed ocean; we will suppose the sea to roar and rage, and make a dreadful noise, and its foaming billows to insult the shore with so much violence, as even to *shake the mountains*, ver. 3. Tho' kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments in continual revolution; tho' their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point; yet will not we fear, knowing that all these troubles will end well for the church. See *Psal. xciii. 4.* If the earth be removed those have reason to fear that have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their hearts upon it; but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who then can expect to be most happy, when *the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.* Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters, who build their confidence on such a floating foundation, but not those who are led to *the Rock that is higher than they*, and find firm footing upon that rock.

2. How well-grounded the defiance of this danger is, considering how well guarded the church is, and that interest which we are concerned for. It is not any private particular concern of our own that we are in pain about; no, it is the city of God, *the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High*; it is the ark of God for which our hearts tremble: But when we consider what God has provided for the comfort and safety of his church, we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings. Here is,

1. Joy to the church, even in the most melancholy and sorrowful times, ver. 4. *There is a river*, the streams whereof shall make it glad, even then when the waters of the sea roar and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which *went softly by Jerusalem*, Isa. viii. 6, 7. and tho' of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made serviceable to the defence of Jerusalem, in Hezekiah's time, Isa. xxii. 10, 11. But this here must be understood spiritually; the covenant of grace is the river, the promises of which are the streams; the Spirit of grace is the river, (*John vii. 38, 39.*) the comforts of which are *the streams that make glad the city of our God.* God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a place of *broad rivers and streams*, Isa. xxxiii. 21. The streams that make glad the city of God, are not rapid, but gentle, like those of Siloam. Note, The spiritual comforts which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to balance the most loud and noisy threatnings of an angry and malicious world.

2. Establishment to the church, tho' heaven and earth are shaken, yet *God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved*, ver. 5. God has assured his church of his special presence with it, and concern for it; his honour is embarked in it, he hath set up his tabernacle in it, and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved, i. e. (1.) Not destroyed, or removed, as the earth may be, ver. 2. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when that is in ruins. It is *built upon a rock*, and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* (2.) Not disturbed, not much moved with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us.

3. Deliverance to the church, tho' its dangers be very great; God shall help her, and then who can hurt her? help her under her troubles, that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted, the more she shall multiply; God shall help her out of her troubles, and that right early; *when the morning appeareth*, i. e. very speedily, for he is a present help, ver. 1. and very seasonably: then when things are brought to the last extremity, and when the relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by particular believers themselves; if God be in our hearts, in the midst of us by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped, let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well, and will end well.

6. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. 7. The LORD of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. 8. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth, he

breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in funder, he burneth the chariot in the fire. 10. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11. The LORD of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

These verses give glory to God, both as King of nations, and as King of saints.

1. As King of nations, ruling the world by his power and providence, and over-ruling all the affairs of the children of men to his own glory; he doth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say, What doest thou?

(1.) He checks the rage, and breaks the power of the nations that oppose him and his interests in the world, ver. 6. *The heathen raged* at David's coming to the throne, and at the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of David, compare *Psal. ii. 1, 2.* *The kingdoms were moved* with indignation, and rose in a tumultuous furious manner to oppose it; but God uttered his voice, *shake to them in his wrath*, and they were moved in another sense, they were struck into confusion and consternation, put into disorder, and all their measures broke, the earth itself melted under them, so that they found no firm footing, their earthly hearts failed them for fear, and dissolved like snow before the sun: Such a colligation of the spirits of the enemies is described, *Judg. v. 4, 5.* and see *Luke xxi. 25, 26.*

(2.) When he pleaseth to draw his sword, and give it commission, he can make great havock among the nations, and lay all waste, ver. 8. *Come, behold the works of the Lord*, they are to be observed, *Psal. lxvi. 5.* and to be sought out, *Psal. cxi. 2.* All the operations of providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly, take notice of the *desolations he hath made in the earth*, among the enemies of his church, who thought to have laid the land of Israel desolate. The destruction they designed to bring upon the church, has been turned upon themselves. War is a tragedy which commonly destroys the stage it is acted on; David carried the war into the enemies country; and, oh, what desolations did it make there! cities were burnt, countries laid waste, armies of men cut off and laid in heaps upon heaps; come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand in awe of God; say, *How terrible art thou in thy works?* *Psal. lxvi. 3.* Let all that oppose him see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear him, and trust in him see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the church. Let them gird themselves, but *they shall be broken to pieces.*

(3.) When he pleaseth to sheathe his sword, he puts an end to the wars of the nations, and crowns them with peace, ver. 9. War and peace depends on his word and will, as much as storms and calms at sea do, *Psal. cvii. 25, 29.* *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth*; sometimes in pity to the nations, that they may have a breathing time, when, by long wars with each other, they have run themselves out of breath; both sides, perhaps, are weary of the war, and willing to let it fall; expedients are found out for accommodation; martial princes are removed, and peace-makers set in their room; and then the bow is broken by consent, the spear cut asunder, and turned into a pruning-hook, and the sword beaten into a plow-share; and the chariots of war burned, there being no more occasion for them; or rather, it may be meant of what he doth at other times in favour of his own people. He maketh those wars to cease that were waged against them, and designed for their ruin. He breaks the enemies bow that was drawn against them; *no weapon formed against Sion shall prosper*, Isa. liv. 17. The total destruction of Gog and Magog is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war, *Ezek. xxxix. 9, 10.* which intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace, which made it needless to lay up those weapons of war for their own service. The bringing of a long war to a good issue, is a work of the Lord, which we ought to behold with wonder and thankfulness.

2. As King of saints, and as such we must own that *great and marvellous are his works*, Rev. xv. 3.

He doth, and will do great things,

1. For his own glory, ver. 10. *Be still, and know that I am God.* (1.) Let his enemies be still, and threaten no more, but know it to their terror, that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that will certainly be too hard for them; let them rage no more, for it is all in vain, *he that sits in heaven laughs at them*; and, in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour, he will be exalted among the heathen, and not among his own people, he will be exalted in the earth, and not only in the church. Men will set up themselves, will have their own way, and do their own will, but let them know that God will be exalted, he will have his way; will do his own will, will glorify his own name, and *wherein they deal proudly, he will be above them*, and make them know that he is so. (2.) Let his own

own people be still, let them be calm and sedate, and tremble no more, but know to their comfort that the Lord is God, he is God alone, and will be exalted above the heathen; let him alone to maintain his honour, to fulfil his own counsels, and to support his own interest in the world. Though we be depressed, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us; he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, *Father, glorify thy name*, we ought to act faith upon the answer given to that prayer, when Christ himself prayed it. *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again.* Amen, Lord, so be it.

2. For his peoples safety and protection. He triumphs in the former, *I will be exalted*, they triumph in this, *ver. 7.* and again, *ver. 11.* It is the burthen of the song, *The Lord of hosts is with us*, he is on our side, he takes our part, is present with us, and president over us, and *the God of Jacob is our refuge* to whom we may flee, and in whom we may confide and be sure of safety. Let all believers triumph in this. (1.) They have the presence of a God of power, of all power. *The Lord of hosts is with us.* God is the Lord of hosts, for he has all the creatures which are called the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them, as the instruments either of his justice, or of his mercy. This sovereign Lord is with us, sides with us, acts with us, and has promised he will never leave us. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them if the Lord of hosts be with us. (2.) They are under the protection of a God in covenant; who not only is able to help them, but is engaged in honour and faithfulness to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob; and he is our refuge, by whom we are shelter'd, and in whom we are satisfied, who by his providence secures our welfare, when without are fightings; and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establisheth things, when within are fears. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob has been, is, and will be, with us; has been, is, and will be, our refuge; the original includes all; and well may Selah be added to it. Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

P S A L M XLVII.

The scope of this psalm is to stir us up to praise God, to stir up all people to do it; and, (1.) *We are directed in what manner to do it, publicly, cheerfully, and intelligently*, *ver. 1, 6, 7.* (2.) *We are furnished with matter for praise.* (1.) *God's majesty*, *ver. 2.* (2.) *His sovereign and universal dominion*, *ver. 2, 7, 8, 9.* (3.) *The great things he had done and would do for his people*, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* Many suppose that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the bringing up of the ark to mount Zion, which, *ver. 5.* seems to refer to; God is gone up with a shout; but it looks further to the ascension of Christ into the heavenly Zion, after he had finished his undertaking on earth, and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world, to which the heathen should become willing subjects. In singing this psalm, we are to give honour to the exalted Redeemer, to rejoice in his exaltation, and to celebrate his praises, confessing that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **O** CLAP your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph: 2. For the LORD most High is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. 3. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. 4. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

The psalmist having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all about him in the blessed work of praise; as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others backwardness to, and barrenness in, this work. Observe in these verses,

1. Who are called upon to praise God; all ye people, all ye people of Israel; those were his own subjects, and under his charge, and therefore he will engage them to praise God, for on them he has an influence. Whatever others do, he and his house, he and his people, shall praise the Lord. Or, all ye people and nations of the earth; and so it may be taken as a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church, see *Rom. xv. 11.*

2. What they are called upon to do; *O clap your hands*, in token of your own joy and satisfaction in what God has done for you; of your approbation, nay, your admiration, of what No. xli.

God has done in general; and of your indignation against all the enemies of God's glory, *Job xxvii. 23.* *Clap your hands*, as men transported with pleasure, that cannot contain themselves; shout unto God, not to make him hear, his ear is not heavy, but to make all about you hear, and take notice how much you are affected and filled with the works of God. Shout with the voice of triumph in him, and in his power and goodness, that others may join with you in the triumph. Note, Such expressions of pious and devout affections as to some may seem indecent and imprudent; yet ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed, because, if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection, and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.

3. What is suggested to us as matter for our praise,

1. That the God with whom we have to do, is a God of awful majesty, *ver. 2.* *The Lord most High is terrible.* He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest; there are those perfections in him that are to be revered by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with him.

2. That he is a God of sovereign and universal dominion; he is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power; a King over all the earth, all the creatures being made by him, are subject to him, and therefore he is a great King; the King of kings.

3. That he takes a particular care of his people and their concerns, has done so, and ever will;

1. In giving them victory and success, *ver. 3.* Subduing the people and nations under them, both those that stood in their way, *Psalm xlv. 2.* and those that made attempts upon them. This God had done for them, witness the planting of them in Canaan, and their continuance there unto this day. This they doubted not but he would still do for them by his servant David, who prospered which way soever he turned his victorious arms; but this looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles. He shall bring them in as sheep into the fold, so the word signifies, not for slaughter, but for preservation. He shall subdue their affections, and make them a willing people in the day of his power; shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and reduce them which had gone astray, under the conduct of the great shepherd and bishop of souls, *1 Pet. ii. 25.*

2. In giving them rest and settlement, *ver. 4.* *He shall choose our inheritance for us:* He hath chosen the land of Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel, it was the land which the Lord their God spied out for them, see *Deut. xxxii. 8.* This justified their possession of that land, and gave them a good title; and this sweetened their enjoyment of it, and made it comfortable; they had reason to think it a happy lot, and to be satisfied in it, when it was that which infinite wisdom chose for them. And the setting up of God's sanctuary in it, made it the excellency, the honour of Jacob, *Amos vi. 8.* and he chose so good an inheritance for Jacob, because he loved him, *Deut. vii. 8.* Apply this spiritually, and it speaks, (1.) The happiness of the saints, that God himself hath chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a goodly heritage: he has chosen it who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy, and he has chosen so well, that he himself has undertaken to be the inheritance of his people, *Psalm xvi. 5.* and he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, *1 Pet. i. 4.* This will be indeed the excellency of Jacob, whom because he loved, he prepared for them such a happiness as eye has not seen. (2.) The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, God shall choose my inheritance for me, let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment. He knows what is good for me better than I do for myself, and therefore I will have no will of my own but what is resolved into his.

5. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a triumph. 6. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. 7. For God is the King of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding. 8. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. 9. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God, and to sing his praises; so backward are we to this duty, that we have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line; so we are here, *ver. 6.* *Sing praises to God*, and again, *sing praises: sing praises to our King*, and again, *sing praises.* This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent and abundant in; we may sing praises again and again in the same words, and it is no vain repetition, if it be done with new affections. Should not a people praise their God? (*Dan. v. 4.*) Should not subjects

praise their king? God is our God; our King, and therefore we must praise him; we must sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them, and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule subjoined, *ver. 7. Sing ye praises with understanding, with Maschil.* (1.) Intelligently; as those that do yourselves understand why, and for what reasons you praise God, and what is the meaning of the service: This is the gospel rule, *1 Cor. xiv. 15. To sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also*; it is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, *Eph. v. 19.* It is not an acceptable service, if it be not a reasonable service. (2.) Instructively, as those that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him.

Three things are mentioned in these verses as just matter for our praises, and each of them will admit of a double sense;

1. We must praise God going up, *ver. 5. God is gone up with a shout*; which may refer, (1.) To the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity, David himself dancing before it; the priests, it is likely, blowing the trumpets, and the people following with their loud huzzas. The ark being the instituted token of God's special presence with them, when that was brought up by warrant from him, he might be said to go up: and the emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more publick and solemn administration of them is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in, and give thanks for. (2.) To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven, when he had finished his work on earth, *Acts i. 9.* Then God went up with a shout, the shout of a king, of a conqueror, as one that having spoiled principalities and powers, then led captivity captive, *Psal. lxviii. 18.* He went up as Mediator, typified by the ark and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was into the most holy place, *i. e. into heaven itself*, see *Heb. ix. 24.* We read not of a shout, or the sound of a trumpet at the ascension of Christ, but they were the inhabitants of the upper world, those sons of God that then shouted for joy, *Job xxxvii. 7.* He shall come again in the same manner as he went, *Acts i. 11.* and we are sure he shall come again with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet.

2. We must praise God reigning, *ver. 7, 8.* God is not only our king, and therefore we owe our homage to him, but he is King of all the earth, *ver. 7.* over all the kings of the earth, and therefore, in every place, the incense of praise is to be offered up to him. Now this may be understood, (1.) Of the kingdom of providence; God, as Creator, and the God of nature, reigns over the heathen, disposeth of them, and all their affairs as he pleaseth, tho' they know him not, nor have any regard to him. He sits upon the throne of his holiness, which he hath prepared in the heavens, and there he ruleth over all, even over the heathen, serving his own purposes by them and upon them. See here the extent of God's government; all are born within his allegiance; even the heathen that serve other gods, yet are ruled by the true God, our God, whether they will or no. See the equity of his government. It is a throne of holiness on which he sits, whence he gives warrants, orders, and judgment, on which we are sure there is no iniquity. (2.) Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose throne is for ever and ever, reigns over the heathen, not only he is intrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes, that were bred up in heathenism, *Eph. ii. 12, 13.* This the apostle speaks of as a great mystery, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, *Eph. iii. 6.* Christ sits upon the throne of his holiness, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are intended to shew forth God's holiness, and to advance holiness among the children of men.

3. We must praise God as attended and honoured by the princes of the people, *ver. 9.* This may be understood, (1.) Of the congress or convention of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes to the solemn feast, or to dispatch the publick business of the nation. It was the power of Israel that they were the people of the God of Abraham, as they were Abraham's seed, and taken into his covenant; and thanks be to God, this blessing of Abraham is come upon the isles of the Gentiles, *Gal. iii. 14.* It was their happiness that they had a settled government, princes of their people, who were the shields of their land; magistracy is the shield of a nation, and it is a great mercy to any people to have this shield; especially when their princes, their shields, belong unto the Lord, are devoted to his honour, and their power is employed in his service, for then he is greatly exalted. It is likewise the honour of God, that in another sense, the shields of the earth do belong to him, magistracy is his institution, and he serves his own purposes by it in the government of the world, turning the hearts of kings as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleaseth. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the publick welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation in the things that belong to its peace, is a very happy omen, which promiseth abundance of blessings. (2.) It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles

into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah, the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the New Jerusalem. That they should all become the people of the God of Abraham, to whom it was promised that he should be the Father of many nations. The volunteers of the people, so it may be read; it is the same word that is used, *Psal. cx. 3. Thy people shall be willing*; for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing to be his. When the shields of the earth, the ensigns of royal dignity, *1 Kings xiv. 27, 28.* are surrendered to the Lord Jesus, as the keys of a city are presented to the conqueror or sovereign, when princes use their power for the advancement of the interests of religion, then Christ is greatly exalted.

P S A L M XLVIII.

This psalm, as the two former, is a triumphant song; some think it was penned on occasion of Jehoshaphat's victory, *2 Chron. xx.* Others, of the rout given to Sennacherib, when his army laid siege to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time; but, for ought I know, it might be penned by David, upon occasion of some eminent victory obtained in his time; yet not so calculated for that, but that it might serve any other the like occasion in aftertimes, and be applicable also to the glories of the gospel church, of which Jerusalem was a type, especially, when it shall come to be a church triumphant, the heavenly Jerusalem, *Heb. xii. 22.* The Jerusalem which is above, *Gal. iv. 26.* Jerusalem is here praised, (1.) For its relation to God, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) For God's care of it, *ver. 3.* (3.) For the terror it strikes upon its enemies, *ver. 4—7.* (4.) For the pleasure it gives to its friends, who delight to think, (1.) Of what God has done, doth, and will do, for it, *ver. 8.* (2.) Of the gracious discoveries he makes of himself, in and for that holy city, *ver. 9, 10.* (3.) Of the effectual provision which is made for its safety, *ver. 11—13.* (4.) Of the assurance we have of the perpetuity of God's covenant with the children of Zion, *ver. 14.* In singing this psalm, we must be affected with the privilege we have as members of the gospel church, and must express and excite our sincere good will to all its interests.

A song and psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. GREAT is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 3. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 4. For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. 5. They saw it, and so they marvelled, they were troubled, and hastened away. 6. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. 7. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east-wind.

The psalmist is designing to praise Jerusalem, and to set forth the grandeur of that city, but he begins with the praises of God, and his greatness, *ver. 1.* and ends with the praises of God, and his goodness, *ver. 14.* For whatever is the subject of our praises, God must be both the Alpha and Omega of them. And particularly, whatever is said to the honour of the church, must redound to the honour of the church's God.

What is here said to the honour of Jerusalem, is,

1. That the king of heaven owns it; it is the city of our God, *ver. 1.* which he chose out of all the cities of Israel to put his name there; and of Zion he said kinder things than ever he said of any place upon earth, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it*, *Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14.* It is the city of the great King, *ver. 2.* the King of all the earth, who is pleased to declare himself in a special manner present there. This our Saviour quotes to prove, that to swear by Jerusalem, is profanely to swear by God himself, *Matt. v. 35.* for it is the city of the great King, who has chosen it for the special residence of his grace, as heaven is of his glory.

(1.) It is enlightened with the knowledge of God. In Judah God is known, and his name is great, but especially in Jerusalem, the head quarters of the priests, whose lips were to keep this knowledge. In Jerusalem God is great, *ver. 1.* who in other places was made little of, was made nothing of. Happy the kingdom, the city, the family, the heart in which God is great, in which he is uppermost, in which he is all. There God is known, *ver. 3.* and where he is known he will be great, none contempt God but those that are ignorant of him.

(2.) It is devoted to the honour of God. It is therefore called the mountain of his holiness, for holiness to the Lord is written upon it, and all the furniture of it, *Zech. xiv. 20, 21.* This is the

the privilege of the church of Christ, that it is a holy nation, a peculiar people; Jerusalem, the type of it, is called the holy city, as bad as it was, *Mat. xxvii. 53.* till that was set up, but never after.

(3.) It is the place appointed for the solemn service and worship of God. There he is greatly praised, and *greatly to be praised*, ver. 1. Note, The clearer discoveries are made to us of God and his greatness, the more it is expected we should abound in his praises. They that from all parts of the country brought their offerings to Jerusalem, had reason to be thankful, that God would not only permit them thus to attend him, but promise to accept them, and meet them with a blessing, and reckon himself praised and honoured by their services. Herein Jerusalem typified the gospel-church, for what little tribute or praise God has from this earth, ariseth from that church upon earth, which is therefore his tabernacle among men.

(4.) It is taken under his special protection, ver. 3. He is *known for a refuge*; i. e. He has approved himself such a one, and as such a one he is there applied to by his worshippers. They that know him, will *trust in him, and seek to him*, Psal. ix. 10. God was known not only in the streets, but even in the palaces of Jerusalem, for a refuge; the great men had recourse to God, and acquaintance with him. And then religion was likely to flourish in the city, when it reigned in the palaces.

(5.) Upon all these accounts, Jerusalem, and especially mount Sion, on which the temple was built, were universally beloved and admired, *Beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth*, ver. 2. The situation must needs be every way agreeable, when infinite wisdom chose it for the place of the sanctuary; and that which made it beautiful was, that it was the mountain of holiness, for there is a beauty in holiness. This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground which was thus beautified with holiness, be called the joy of the whole earth, i. e. what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, that God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth. Mount Sion was on the north-side of Jerusalem, and so was a shelter to the city from the cold and bleak winds that blew from that quarter; or if fair weather was expected out of the north, they were thus directed to look Sion-ward for it.

2. That the kings of the earth were afraid of it. That God was known in their palaces for a refuge, they had had a late instance, and a very remarkable one. Whatever it was,

1. They had had but too much occasion to fear their enemies. For the kings were assembled, ver. 4. The neighbouring princes were confederate against Jerusalem, their heads and horns, their policies and powers, were combined for its ruin; they were assembled with all their forces, they passed, advanced, and marched on together, not doubting but presently to make themselves masters of that city which should have been the joy, but was the envy of the whole earth.

2. God made their enemies to fear them. The very sight of Jerusalem struck them into a consternation, and gave check to their fury; as the sight of the tents of Jacob frightened Balaam from his purpose to curse Israel, *Numb. xxiv. 2. They saw it and marvelled, and hasted away*, ver. 5. Not *veni, vidi, vici*, but, on the contrary, *veni, vidi, victus sum*: Not that there was any thing to be seen in Jerusalem that was so very formidable, but that the sight of it brought to mind what they had heard concerning the special presence of God in that city, and the divine protection it was under, and God impressed such terrors upon their minds thereby, as made them retire with precipitation. Tho' they were kings, tho' they were many in confederacy, yet they knew themselves an unequal match for omnipotence, and therefore *fear came upon them, and pain*, ver. 6. Note, God can dispirit the stoutest of his church's enemies, and soon put them in pain, that live at ease. The fright they were in upon the sight of Jerusalem, is here compared to the throws of a woman in travail, which are sharp and grievous, which sometimes come suddenly, 1 *Thes. v. 3.* which cannot be avoided, and which are effects of sin and the curse. The defeat hereby given to their designs upon Jerusalem, is compared to the dreadful work made with a fleet of ships by a violent storm, when some are split, others shattered, all dispersed, ver. 7. *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east-wind*; effects at sea lie thus exposed. The terrors of God are compared to an east-wind, *Job xxvii. 20, 21.* These shall put them into confusion, and break all their measures; *Who knows the power of God's anger?*

8. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God, God will establish it for ever. Selah. 9. We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. 10. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. 11. Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. 12. Walk about Zion, and go round

about her: tell the towers thereof. 13. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. 14. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.

We have here the good use and improvement which the people of God are taught to make of his late glorious and gracious appearances for them against their enemies, that they might work for their good.

1. Let our faith in the word of God be hereby confirmed. If we compare what God has done, with what he has spoken, we shall find, that as *we have heard*, so *have we seen*, ver. 8. and what we have seen, obliges us to believe what we have heard. (1.) As we have heard done in former providences, in the days of old, so have we seen done in our own days. Note, God's latter appearances for his people, against his and their enemies, are consonant to his former appearances, and should put us in mind of them. (2.) As we have heard in the promise and prediction, so have we seen in the performance and accomplishment. We have heard that God is the Lord of hosts, and that Jerusalem is the city of our God, is dear to him, is his particular care, and now we have seen it; we have seen the power of our God, we have seen his goodness, we have seen his care and concern for us; that he is a *wall of fire round about Jerusalem, and the glory in the midst of her*. Note, In the great things that God has done, and is doing for his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures; and this would help us the better to understand both the providence itself, and the scripture that is fulfilled in it.

2. Let our hope of the stability and perpetuity of the church, be hereby encouraged. From what we have seen, compared with what we have heard in the city of our God, we may conclude, that God will establish it for ever. This was not fulfilled in Jerusalem, that was long since destroyed, and all its glory laid in the dust, but has its accomplishment in the gospel church; we are sure that that shall be established for ever, it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, *Mat. xvi. 18.* God himself has undertaken the establishment of it, it is the Lord that has founded Sion, *Isa. xiv. 32.* And what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, may encourage us to hope in that promise of God, upon which the church is built.

3. Let our minds be hereby filled with good thoughts of God. From what we have heard, and seen, and hope for, we may take occasion to think much of God's loving kindness, whenever we meet *in the midst of his temple*, ver. 9. All the streams of mercy that flow down to us, must be run up to the fountain of God's loving kindness. It is not owing to any merit of ours, but purely to his mercy, and the peculiar favour he bears to his people. This therefore we must think of with delight, think frequently and fixedly of; what subject can we dwell upon more noble, more pleasant, more profitable! We must have God's loving kindness always before our eyes, *Psal. xxvi. 3.* especially when we attend upon him in his temple. And when we enjoy the benefit of publick ordinances undisturbed, we meet in his temple, and there is none to make us afraid, we should take occasion from thence to think of his loving kindness.

4. Let us give to God the glory of the great things which he has done for us, and mention them to his honour, ver. 10. *According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise*, not only in Jerusalem, but to the ends of the earth. By the late signal deliverance of Jerusalem, God had made himself a name, i. e. He had gloriously discovered his wisdom, power, and goodness, and made all the nations about sensible of it. And so was his praise, i. e. some in all parts would be found giving glory to him accordingly. As far as his name goes, his praise will go, at least it should go, and at length it shall go, when all the ends of the world shall praise him, *Psal. xxii. 27. Rev. xi. 15.* Some by his name understand, especially that glorious name of his, the Lord of hosts; according to that name, so is his praise; for all the creatures, even to the ends of the earth, are under his command. But his people must in a special manner acknowledge his justice in all he doth for them; *righteousness fills thy right hand*, i. e. All the operations of thy power are consonant to the eternal rules of equity.

5. Let all the members of the church in particular, take to themselves the comfort of what God doth for his church in general, ver. 11. *Let mount Zion rejoice*, the priests and Levites that attend the sanctuary, and then let all the daughters of Judah, the country towns, and the inhabitants of them, be glad; let the women in their songs and dances, as usual on occasion of publick joys, celebrate with thankfulness this great salvation which God has wrought for us. Note, When we have given God the praise, we may then take the pleasure of the extraordinary deliverances of the church; and be glad because of God's judgments, i. e. the operations of his providence, all which we may see wrought in wisdom (therefore called judgments) and working for the good of his church.

6. Let

6. Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church's beauty, strength, and safety, and faithfully transmit our observations to those that shall come after us, *ver. 12, 13. Walk about Sion.* Some think this refers to the ceremony of the triumph; let those who are employed in that solemnity walk round the walls, as they did, *Neb. xii. 31.* singing and praising God: And in doing this, let them tell the towers, and mark well the bulwarks, (1.) That they might magnify the late wonderful deliverance God had wrought for them. Let them observe with wonder, that the towers and bulwarks are all in their full strength, and none of them damaged; the palaces in their beauty, and none of them blemished; there is not the least damage done to the city, by the kings that were assembled against it, *ver. 5. Tell this to the generation following,* as a wonderful instance of God's care of his holy city, that the enemies should not only not ruin or destroy it, but not so much as hurt or deface it. (2.) That they might fortify themselves against the fear of the like threatening danger another time. And so, (1.) We may understand it literally of Jerusalem, and the strong hold of Sion. Let the daughters of Judah see the towers and bulwarks of Sion, with as much pleasure as the kings their enemies, saw them with terror, *ver. 5.* Jerusalem was generally looked upon as an impregnable place, as appears, *Lam. iv. 12. All the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that an enemy should have entered the gates of Jerusalem.* Nor could they have entered, if the inhabitants had not fanned away their defence. *Set your heart to her bulwarks.* That intimates, that the principal bulwarks of Sion were not the objects of sense, which they might set their eye upon, but the objects of faith, which they must set their hearts upon; it was well enough fortified indeed both by nature and art; but its bulwarks, that were mostly to be relied upon, were the special presence of God in it, the beauty of holiness he had put upon it, and the promises he had made concerning it. Consider Jerusalem's strength, and tell it to the generations to come, that they may do nothing to weaken it, and that if at any time it be in distress, they may not basely surrender it to the enemy as not tenable. Calvin observes here, that when they are directed to transmit to posterity a particular account of the towers and bulwarks, and palaces of Jerusalem, it is intimated, that in process of time they would all be destroyed, and remain no longer to be seen; for otherwise, what need was there to preserve the description and history of them? When the disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple, their master told them, that in a little time one stone of it should not be left upon another, *Matt. xxiv. 1, 2.* Therefore (2.) This must certainly be applied to the gospel church, that mount Sion, *Heb. xii. 22.* Consider the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces, of that, that you may be invited and encouraged to join yourselves to it, and embark in it. See it founded on Christ, the rock fortified by the divine power, guarded by him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks, tell this to the generation following, that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests, and cleave to it.

7. Let us triumph in God, and in the assurances we have of his everlasting loving kindness, *ver. 14.* Tell this to the generation following, transmit this truth as a sacred depositum to your posterity, that this God, who has now done such great things for us, is our God for ever and ever; he is constant and unchangeable in his love to us and care for us. (1.) If God be our God, he is ours for ever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is the everlasting blessedness of glorified saints, that *God himself will be with them, and will be their God,* *Rev. xxi. 3.* (2.) If he be our God, he will be our guide, our faithful constant guide to shew us our way, and to lead us in it; he will be so, even unto death, which will be the period of our way, and will bring us to our rest. He will lead and keep us, even to the last. He will be our guide above death; so some. He will so guide us, as to set us above the reach of death, so that it shall not be able to do us any real hurt. He will be our guide, beyond death, so others. He will conduct us safe to a happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, he will conduct and convey us safe to death, through death, and beyond death; down to death, and up again to glory.

P S A L M XLIX.

This psalm is a sermon, and so is the next. In most of the psalms we have the psalmist praying or praising; in these we have him preaching; and it is our duty in singing psalms to teach and admonish ourselves, and one another. The scope and design of this discourse, is to convince the men of this world of their sin and folly, in setting their hearts upon the things of this world, and so to persuade them to seek the things of a better world; as also to comfort the people of God, in reference to their own troubles, and the grief that ariseth from the prosperity of the wicked. (1.) In the preface he proposeth to awaken worldly people out of their security, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* and to comfort himself and other godly people in a day of distress, *ver. 4, 5.* (2.) In the rest of the

psalm, (1.) He endeavours to convince sinners of their folly in doting upon the wealth of this world, by shewing them, (1.) That they cannot with all their wealth save their friends from death, *ver. 6—9.* (2.) They cannot save themselves from death, *ver. 10.* (3.) They cannot secure to themselves a happiness in this world, *ver. 11, 12.* Much less, (4.) Can they secure to themselves a happiness in the other world, *ver. 14.* (2.) He endeavours to comfort himself and other good people, (1.) Against the fear of death, *ver. 15.* (2.) Against the fear of the prospering power of wicked people, *ver. 16—20.* In singing this psalm let us receive these instructions, and be wise.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **H**EAR this, all ye people, give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: 2. Both low and high, rich and poor together. 3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom: and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. 4. I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp. 5. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

This is the psalmist's preface to his discourse concerning the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; and we seldom meet with an introduction more solemn than this is, for there is no truth of more undoubted certainty, nor of greater weight and importance, and the consideration of which will be of more advantage to us.

1. He demands the attention of others to do that which he was about to say, *ver. 1, 2. Hear this, all ye people; hear it, and heed it, hear it, and consider it; what is spoken once, hear twice, Hear and give ear,* *Psal. lxii. 9, 11.* Not only, hear, all ye Israelites, and give ear all the inhabitants of Canaan, but *hear, all ye people, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world,* for this doctrine is not peculiar to those that are blessed with divine revelation, but even the light of nature witnesseth to it. All men may know, and therefore let all men consider that their riches will not profit them in the day of death. Both low and high, both rich and poor, must come together to hear the word of God; let both therefore hear this with application. Let those that are high and rich in the world hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions, and not be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyment of them, but lay them out in doing good, that with them they may make to themselves friends; let those that are poor and low, hear this, and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. Poor people are as much in danger by an inordinate desire towards the wealth of the world, as rich people by an inordinate delight in it.

He gives a good reason why his discourse should be regarded, *ver. 3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom;* what he had to say, (1.) It was true and good. It is wisdom and understanding, it will make those wise and intelligent that receive it, and submit to it. It is not doubtful, but certain, not trivial, but weighty, not a matter of nice speculation, but of admirable use to guide us in the right way to our great end. (2.) It was what he had himself well digested. What his mouth spoke was the meditation of his heart, as *Psal. xix. 14—xlv. 1.* it was what God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered, and was fully apprized of the meaning of, and convinced of the truth of. That which ministers speak from their own hearts, is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers.

2. He engageth his own attention, *ver. 4. I will incline mine ear to a parable.* It is called a parable, not because it is figurative and obscure, but because it is a wise discourse, and very instructive: It is the same word that is used concerning Solomon's proverbs. The psalmist will himself incline his ear to it. This intimates (1.) That he was taught it by the Spirit of God, and did not speak of himself. Those that undertake to teach others must first learn themselves. (2.) That he thought himself nearly concerned in it, and was resolved not to venture his own soul upon that bottom, which he dissuaded others from venturing theirs upon. (3.) That he would not expect others should attend to that which he himself did not attend to as a matter of the greatest importance. Where God gives the tongue of the learned, he first wakens the ear to hear as the learned, *Isa. l. 4.*

3. He promiseth to make the matter as plain, and as affecting as he could; *I will open my dark saying upon the harp.* What he learned for himself, he would not conceal or confine to himself, but would communicate it for the benefit of others. (1.) Some understood it not, it was a riddle to them, tell them of the vanity of the things that are seen, and of the reality and weight of invisible things, and they say, *Alas Lord God, doth he not speak parables?* For the sake of such he would open this dark saying, and make it so plain, that he that runs might read it. (2.) Others understood it well enough, but they were not moved by it, it never affected them, and for their sake he would open

open it upon the harp, and try that expedient to work upon them, to win upon them. *A verse may find him who a sermon flies.* Herbert.

4. He begins with the application of it to himself, and that is the right method in which to treat of divine things; we must first preach to ourselves, before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the folly of carnal security, *ver. 6.* he here lays down, from his own experience, the benefit and comfort of a holy gracious security, which they enjoy who trust in God, and not in their worldly wealth; *Wherefore should I fear,* he means, wherefore should I fear their fear, (Isa. viii. 12.) the fears of worldly people. (1.) Wherefore should I be afraid of them. Wherefore should I fear in the days of trouble and persecution, when the iniquity of my heels, or of my supplanters that endeavour to trip up my heels, shall compass me about, and they shall surround me with their mischievous attempts. Why should I be afraid of those, all whose power lies in their wealth, and that will not enable them to redeem their friends, and therefore I will not fear it, it cannot enable them to ruin me. The great men of the world will not appear at all formidable, when we consider what little stead their wealth will stand themselves in. We need not fear their casting us down from our excellency, who cannot support themselves in their own excellency. (2.) Wherefore should I be afraid like them? The days of old age and death are the *days of evil*, Eccles. xii. 1. In the day of judgment the iniquity of our heels, or of our steps, our past sins, will compass us about, will be set in order before us. *Every work will be brought into judgment with every secret thing;* and *every one of us must give account of himself.* In these days worldly wicked people will be afraid, nothing more dreadful to them than that have set their hearts upon the world, than to think of leaving it; death to them is the king of terrors, because after death the judgment, when their sins will surround them as so many furies; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? *Psal. xxiii. 4.* when his iniquities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified, and then even in the judgment-day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they can lift up their heads with joy, *Luke xxi. 26, 28.* Note, The children of God, tho' never so poor, are in this truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this world, that they are well guarded against the terrors of death, and the judgment to come.

6. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches: 7. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 8. (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever) 9. That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. 10. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. 11. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. 12. Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. 13. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

In these verses we have,

1. A description of the spirit and way of worldly people, whose portion is in this life, *Psal. xvii. 14. ver. 6, 11.* It is taken for granted, that they have wealth, and a multitude of riches, *ver. 6.* Houses and lands of inheritance which they call their own, *ver. 11.* many times God gives abundance of the good things of this world to bad men that live in contempt of him, and rebellion against him; by which it appears, that they are not the best things in themselves, for then God would give most of them to his best friends, and that they are not the best things for us, for then they would not have so much of them, who being marked for ruin, are to be ripened for it by their prosperity, *Prov. i. 32.* It is possible a man may have abundance of the wealth of this world, and be made better by it, may thereby have his heart enlarged in love and thankfulness, and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not mens having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described;

1. They repose a confidence in their riches. They trust in their wealth, *ver. 6.* they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil, and supply them with all good, and they need nothing else, no, not

God himself. Their gold is their hope, *Job xxxi. 24.* and so it becomes their god. Thus our Saviour explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people, *Mark x. 24. How hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!* See *1 Tim. vi. 17.* 2. They take a pride in their riches; they boast themselves in the multitude of them, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour, and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry. *My might, and the power of my hand has gotten me this wealth;* as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent than their neighbours. They boast that they have all they would have, *Psal. x. 3.* and can set all the world at defiance; I sit as a queen, and shall be a lady for ever: therefore they call their lands after their own names, hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory; and if their lands do retain the names by which they called them, it is but a poor honour; but many times they change their names when they change their owners.

3. They flatter themselves with an expectation of the perpetuity of their worldly possessions, *ver. 14. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever,* and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes: but it intimates, (1.) That this thought is deeply rooted in their minds, is rolled and revolved there, and carefully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts. A godly man has thoughts of the world; but they are his outward thoughts, his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things: but a worldly man has only some floating foreign thoughts of the things of God, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest his heart, and is upon the throne there. (2.) There it is industriously concealed; they cannot for shame say that they expect their houses to continue for ever, but inwardly they think so. If they cannot persuade themselves that they shall continue for ever, yet they are so foolish as to think their houses shall, and their dwelling-places; and suppose they should, what good will that do them when they shall be no longer theirs? But they will not, for the world passeth away, and the fashion of it; all things are devoured by the teeth of time.

2. A demonstration of their folly herein. In general, *ver. 13. This their way is their folly.* Note, The way of worldliness is a very foolish way: they that lay up their treasure on earth, and set their affections on things below, act contrary both to right reason, and to their true interest. God himself pronounced him a fool who thought his goods were laid up for many years, and that they would be a portion for his soul, *Luke xii. 19, 20.* And yet their posterity approve their sayings, agree with them in the same sentiments, say as they say, and do as they do, and tread in the steps of their worldliness. Note, The love of the world is a disease that runs in the blood, men have it by kind, till the grace of God cures it.

To prove the folly of carnal worldlings, he shews,

1. That with all their wealth they cannot save the life of the dearest friend they have in the world, nor purchase a reprieve for him when he is under the arrest of death, *ver. 7, 8, 9. There is none of them can by any means redeem his brother.* His brother-worldling, who would give him counter-security out of his own estate, if he would but be bail for him; and gladly he would, in hopes that he might do the same kindness for him another time. But their words will not be taken one for another, nor will one man's estate be the ransom of another man's life. God doth not value it, it is of no account with him; and the true value of things is as they stand in his books. His justice will not accept it by way of commutation or equivalent. The Lord of our brother's life is the Lord of our estate, and may take both if he pleaseth, without either difficulty to himself or wrong to us; and therefore one cannot be ransom for another. We cannot bribe death, that our brother should still live, much less that he should live for ever in this world, nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we must needs die, and return to the dust, and there is no discharge from that war. What folly is it to trust to that, and boast of that, which will not enable us so much as for one hour to respite the execution of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or a friend that is to us as our own soul! It is certainly true, that the redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever, i. e. Life when it is going cannot be staid, and when it is gone it cannot be recalled by any human art, or worldly price. But this looks further to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old Testament saints had an eye to as the Redeemer. Immortality and an everlasting life is a jewel of too great a value to be purchased by the wealth of this world. We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, *1 Pet. i. 18, 19.* The learned Dr Hammond applies the 8th and 9th verses expressly to Christ: the redemption of the soul shall be precious, shall be high-prized, it shall cost very dear; but being once wrought, it shall cease for ever, i. e. it shall never be repeated, *Heb. ix. 25, 26.—x. 13.* And he, i. e. the Redeemer, shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption; he shall rise again before he sees corruption, and then shall live for evermore, *Rev. i. 18.* Christ did that for us which all the riches of the world could not do, and therefore good reason he should be dearer

to us than any worldly things. Christ did that for us which a brother, a friend could not do for us, no not one of the best estate or interest; and therefore those that *love father or brother more than him, are not worthy of him*. This likewise shews the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which would never buy them.

2. That with all their wealth they cannot secure themselves from the stroke of death. The worldling sees, and it vexes him to see it, that *wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish*, ver. 10. Therefore he cannot but expect that it will at length come to his own turn; he cannot find any encouragement to hope that he himself shall continue for ever; and therefore foolishly comforts himself with this, that tho' he shall not, his house shall. Some rich people are wise, they are politicians; but they cannot out-wit death, nor evade his stroke with all their art and management; others are fools and brutish, (*fortuna favet fatuis*) these tho' they do no good, yet perhaps do no great hurt in the world: but that shall not excuse them, they shall perish, and be taken away by death, as well as the wise that did mischief with their craft. Or by the wise and the foolish we may understand the godly and the wicked; the godly die, and their death is their deliverance; the wicked perish, their death is their destruction; but however they leave their wealth to others. (1.) They cannot continue with it, nor will it serve to procure them a reprieve. That is a frivolous plea, tho' once it served a turn, *Jer. xli. 8. Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field*. (2.) They cannot carry it away with them, but must leave it behind them. (3.) They cannot foresee who will enjoy it when they have left it; they must leave it to others, but to whom they know not, perhaps to a fool, *Eccl. ii. 19. perhaps to an enemy*.

And as mens wealth will stand them in no stead in a dying hour, so neither will their honour, ver. 12. *Man being in honour, abideth not*. We will suppose a man advanced to the highest pinnacle of preferment, as great and happy as the world can make him, man in splendor, man at his best estate, surrounded and supported with all the advantages he can desire, yet then he abideth not, his honour doth not continue, that is a fleeting shadow; he himself doth not. He tarries not all night; this world is an inn, in which his stay is so short, that he can scarce be said to get a night's lodging in it; so little rest is there in these things; he has but a baiting-time. *He is like the beasts that perish*, i. e. He must as certainly die as the beasts, and his death will be as final a period to his state in this world as theirs is; his dead body likewise will putrefy as theirs doth; and (as Dr Hammond observes) oft-times the greatest honours and wealth unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity, (as the beasts when they die leave nothing behind them to their young ones, but the wide world to feed in) but fall into other hands immediately, for which he never designed to gather them.

3. That their condition on the other side death will be very miserable. The world they dote upon will not only not save them from death, but will sink them so much the lower into hell, ver. 14. *Like sheep they are laid in the grave*. Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter, *Hos. iv. 16*. and then death comes and shuts them up in the grave like fat sheep in a fold, *to be brought forth to the day of wrath*, Job xxi. 30. Multitudes of them, like flocks of sheep dead of some disease, are thrown into the grave, and there death shall feed on them, the second death *the worm that dies not*, Job xxiv. 20. Their own guilty consciences, like so many vultures, shall be continually preying upon them, with *Son, remember*, Luke xvi. 25. Death insults and triumphs over them, as it is represented in the fall of the king of Babylon, at which *hell from beneath is moved*, Isa. xiv. 9, &c. While a sinner can ask proud death, *where is thy sting?* Death will ask the proud sinner, *where is thy wealth, thy pomp?* and the more he was fattened with prosperity, the more sweetly will death feed on him. And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake, *Dan. xii. 2. the upright shall have dominion over them*; shall not only be advanced to the highest dignity and honour, when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt: elevated to the highest heavens, when they are sunk to the lowest hell; but they shall be assessors with Christ in passing judgment upon them, and shall applaud the justice of God in their ruin. When the rich man in hell begged that Lazarus might bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue, he owned that that upright man had dominion over him, as the foolish virgins also owned the dominion of the wife, and that they lay much at their mercy, when they begged, *give us of your oil*. Let this comfort us in reference to the oppressions which the upright are now groaning under, and the dominion which the wicked have over them. The day is coming, when the tables will be turned (*allu. Est. ix. 1.*) and the upright will have the dominion. Let us now judge of things as they will appear at that day. But what will become of all the beauty of the wicked? Alas! that shall all be consumed in the grave from their dwelling; all that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others cared and admired them, it was all adventitious and borrowed, it was paint

and varnish, and they will rise in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave, that consume all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. Their beauty shall consume, the grave, or hell, being a habitation to every one of them; and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever?

15. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me. Selah. 16. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. 17. For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. 18. Though whiles he lived, he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thy self. 19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers, they shall never see light. 20. Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

Good reason is here given to good people,

1. Why they should not be afraid of death. There is no cause for that fear, if they have such a comfortable prospect as David here has of a happy state on the other side death, ver. 15. He had shewed, ver. 14. how miserable the dead are that die in their sins, where he shews how blessed the dead are that die in the Lord. The distinction of mens outward condition, how great a difference soever it makes in life, makes none at death; rich and poor meet in the grave: but the distinction of mens spiritual state, tho' in this life it makes a small difference, where all things come alike to all, yet at and after death it makes a very great one; *now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*. The righteous has hope in his death, so has David here hope in God concerning his soul. Note, The believing hopes of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory, are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour. They hope,

(1.) That God will redeem their souls from the power of the grave; which includes, (1.) The preserving of the soul from going to the grave with the body. The grave has a power over the body, by virtue of the sentence, *Gen. iii. 19*. and it is cruel enough in executing that power, *Cant. viii. 6*. but it has no such power over the soul; it has power to silence and imprison, and consume the body; but the soul then moves, and acts, and converseth more freely than ever, *Rev. vi. 9, 10*. it is immaterial and immortal. When death breaks the dark-lanthorn, yet it doth not extinguish the candle that was pent up in it. (2.) The re-uniting of the soul and body at the resurrection. The soul is often put for the life; that indeed falls under the power of the grave for a time, but it shall at length be redeemed from it, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The God of life, that was its creator at first, can and will be its redeemer at last. (3.) The salvation of the soul from eternal ruin. God shall redeem my soul from the *sheol*, of hell, the wrath to come, that pit of destruction into which the wicked shall be cast, ver. 14. It is great comfort to dying saints, that they shall not be hurt of the second death, *Rev. ii. 11*. and therefore the first death has no sting, and the grave no victory.

(2.) That he will receive them to himself. He redeems their souls, that he may receive them, *Psal. xxxi. 5. Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it*. He will receive them into his favour, will admit them into his kingdom, into the mansions that are prepared for them, *Joh. xiv. 2, 3*. those everlasting habitations, *Luke xvi. 9*.

2. Why they should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world, which as it is their pride and joy, so it has often been the envy, and grief, and terror of the righteous; which yet, all things considered, there is no reason for.

1. He supposeth the temptation very strong to envy the prosperity of sinners, and to be afraid that they will carry all before them with an high hand, and with their wealth and interest to run down religion and religious people; to be afraid that they will be found the truly happy people; for he supposeth, (1.) That they are made rich, and so are enabled to give law, to all about them, and have every thing at command: *pecunia obediunt omnes & omnia*. (2.) That the glory of their house, from very small beginnings, is increased greatly, which naturally makes men haughty, insolent and imperious, ver. 16. Thus they seem to be the favourites of heaven, and therefore formidable. (3.) That they are very easy and secure in themselves, and in their own minds, ver. 18. In his life-time he blessed his soul, i. e. he thought himself a very happy man, and such an one as he would be, and a very good man, and such an one as he should be, because he prospered in the world. He blessed his soul, as that rich fool who said to his soul, *soul, take thine ease*, and be not disturbed either with cares and fears about the world, or with the rebukes and admonitions of conscience. All is well, and will be well for ever.

Note,

Note, 1. It is of great consequence to us what that is in which we bless our souls, upon the score of which we think well of ourselves. Believers bless themselves in the God of truth, Isa. lxxv. 16. and think themselves happy if he be theirs; carnal people bless themselves in the wealth of the world, and think themselves happy if they have abundance of that. 2. There are many whose precious souls lie under God's curse, and yet they do themselves bless them; they applaud that in themselves, which God condemns, and speak peace to themselves, when which God denounceth war against them. Yet this is not all. (4.) They are in good reputation among their neighbours. Men will praise thee, and cry thee up, as having done well for thy will praise thee, and cry thee up, as having done well for thyself in raising such an estate and family. This is the sentiment of all the children of this world, that those do best for themselves that do most for their bodies, by heaping up riches, though nothing is done at the same time for the soul, nothing for eternity; and accordingly they bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhors, Psal. x. 3. And if men were to be our judges, it were our wisdom thus to recommend ourselves to their good opinion: but what will it avail us to be approved of men, if God condemn us? Dr Hammond understands this of the good man here spoken to, for it is the second person, not of the wicked man spoken of. *He in his life-time blessed his soul, but thou shalt be praised for doing well unto thy self.* The worldling magnified himself, but thou, that dost not, like him, speak well of thy self, but do well for thy self, in securing thy eternal welfare, thou shalt be praised, if not of men, yet of God, which will be thine everlasting honour.

2. He suggests that which is sufficient to take off the strength of the temptation, by directing us to look forward to the end of prospering sinners, Psal. lxxiii. 17. Think what they will be in the other world, and you will see no cause to envy them what they are and have in this world.

1. In the other world they will be never the better for all the wealth and prosperity they are now so fond of; it is a miserable portion, which will not last so long as they must, ver. 17. *When he dies, it is taken for granted that he goes into another world himself, but he shall carry nothing away with him of all that which he has been so long heaping up.* The greatest and wealthiest cannot therefore be the happiest, because they are never the better for their living in this world; as they came naked into it, they shall go naked out of it: But those have something to shew in the other world for their living in this world, who can say, through grace, that though they came corrupt and sinful, and spiritually naked into it, they go renewed and sanctified, and well clothed, with the righteousness of Christ, out. They that are rich in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, have something which when they die they shall carry away with them, something which death cannot strip them of, nay, which death will be the improvement of; but for worldly possessions, as we brought nothing into the world, but what we have we had from others, so it is certain we shall carry nothing out, but leave it to others, 1 Tim. vi. 7. They shall descend, but their glory, that which they called and counted their glory, and gloried in, shall not descend after them, to lessen the disgrace of death and the grave; to bring them off in the judgment, or abate the torments of hell; grace is glory that will ascend with us, but no earthly glory will descend after us.

2. In the other world they will be infinitely the worse for all their abuses of the wealth and prosperity they enjoyed in this world, ver. 19. *The soul shall go to the generation of his fathers, his worldly-wicked fathers, whose sayings he approved, and whose steps he trod in, his fathers that would not hearken to the word of God, Zech. i. 5.* He shall go to be there where they are that shall never see light, shall never have the least glimpse of comfort and joy, being condemned to utter darkness. Be not afraid then of the pomp and power of wicked people; for man that is in honour, if he be not wise and good, his end will be miserable; if he understand not, he is to be pitied rather than envied: A fool, a wicked man in honour, is really as despicable an animal as any under the sun; he is like the beasts that perish, ver. 20. and it is better be a beast, than be a man that makes himself like a beast. Men in honour that understand, that know and do their duty, and make conscience of it, are as gods, and children of the most High: But men in honour that understand not, that are proud, and sensual, and oppressive, are as beasts, and they shall perish like the beasts ingloriously, as to this world, though not like the beasts indemnified as to another world. Let prospering sinners therefore be afraid for themselves, but let not even suffering saints be afraid of them.

P S A L M L.

This psalm, as the former, is a psalm of instruction, not of prayer or praise; it is a psalm of reproof and admonition, in singing of which we are to teach and admonish one another. In the foregoing psalm, after a general demand of attention, God by his prophet deals, ver. 3. with the children of this world, to convince them of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon

the wealth of this world; in this psalm, after a like preface, he deals with those that were in profession the church's children, to convince them of their sin and folly in placing their religion in ritual services, while they neglected practical godliness; and this is as sure a way to ruin as the other. This psalm is intended, 1. As a reproof to the carnal Jews, both those that rested in the external performances of their religion, and were remiss in the more excellent duties of prayer and praise; and those that expounded the law to others, but lived wicked lives themselves. 2. As a prediction of the abolishing of the ceremonial law, and of the introducing of a spiritual way of worship, in and by the kingdom of the Messiah, John iv. 23, 24. 3. As a representation of the day of judgment, in which God will call men to an account concerning their observance of those things which they have thus been taught; men shall be judged according to what is written in the books; and therefore Christ is fitly represented speaking as a judge, then when he speaks as a law-giver. Here is, (1.) The glorious appearance of the prince that gives law and judgment, ver. 1—6. (2.) Instruction given to his worshippers to turn their sacrifices into prayers, ver. 7—15. (3.) A rebuke to those that pretend to worship God, but live in disobedience to his commands, ver. 16—20. their doom read, ver. 21, 22. and warning given to all to look to their conversation as well as to their devotions, ver. 23. And these instructions and admonitions we must take to ourselves, and give to one another in singing this psalm.

¶ A psalm of Asaph.

1. **T**HE mighty God, even the LORD hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof. 2. Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. 3. Our God hath come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. 5. Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. 6. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

It is probable, Asaph was not only the chief musician that was to put a tune to this psalm, but was himself the penman of it; for we read that in Hezekiah's time they praised God in the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. Here is,

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings, ver. 1. *The mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken:* El, Elohim, Jehovah, the God of infinite power, justice, and mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God is the judge, the Son of God came for judgment into the world, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment. All the earth is called to attend, not only because the controversy God had with his people Israel, for their hypocrisy and ingratitude, might safely be referred to any man of reason; nay, let the house of Israel itself judge between God and his vineyard, Isa. v. 3. but because all the children of men are concerned to know the right way of worshipping God, in spirit and in truth, and when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up, all should be instructed in the evangelical worship, and invited to join in it, see Mal. i. 11. Acts x. 34. And because in the day of final judgment, all nations shall be gathered together to receive their doom, and every man shall give an account of himself unto God.

2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat. As when God gave the law to Israel in the wilderness, it is said *he came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir, and shined forth from mount Paran, and came with ten thousands of his saints, and then from his right hand went a fiery law, Deut. xxxiii. 2.* So, with allusion to that, when God comes to reprove them for their hypocrisy, and to send forth his gospel to supersede the legal institutions, it is said here, (1.) *That he shall shine out of Zion,* as then from the top of Sinai, ver. 2. Because in Zion now his oracle was fixed, thence his judgments upon that provoking people were denounced, and thence the orders issued for the execution of them Joel ii. 1. *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion.* Sometimes there are more than ordinary appearances of God's presence and power working with and by his word and ordinances, for the convincing of mens consciences, and the reforming and refining of his church; and then God, who always dwells in Zion, may be said to shine out of Zion. And because the gospel, which set up spiritual worship, was to go forth from mount Zion, Isa. ii. 4. Mic. iv. 1. and the preachers of it were to begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. and Christians are said to come unto mount Zion to receive their instructions, Heb. xii. 22, 28. Zion is here called the perfection of beauty, because it was the holy hill, and holiness is indeed the perfection of beauty. (2.) *That he shall come and not keep silence, shall no longer seem to wink at the sins of men*

men as he had done, *ver. 21.* but shall shew his displeasure at them, and shall also cause that mystery to be published to the world by his holy apostles, which had long lain hid, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, Eph. iii. 5, 6. and that the partition-wall of the ceremonial law should be taken down; this shall now no longer be concealed. In the great day *our God shall come, and shall not keep silence*, but shall make those to hear his judgment that would not hearken to his law. (3.) That his appearance should be very majestic and terrible, *a fire shall devour before him*. The fire of his judgments shall make way for the rebukes of his word, in order to the awakening of the hypocritical nation of the Jews, that the sinners in Sion being afraid of that devouring fire, (*Isa. xxxiii. 14.*) they might be startled out of their sins. When his gospel-kingdom was to be set up, Christ came to send fire on the earth, Luke xii. 44. And the Spirit was given in cloven tongues as of fire, introduced by a rushing mighty wind, which was very tempestuous, *Acts ii. 2, 3.* And in the last judgment, Christ shall come in flaming fire, *2 Thess. i. 8.* see *Dan. vii. 9.* *Heb. x. 27.* (4.) That as on mount Sinai he came with *ten thousands of his saints*, so he shall now call to the heavens from above, to take notice of this solemn process, *ver. 4.* as Moses often called heaven and earth to witness against Israel, *Deut. iv. 26.—xxxii. 1.* and God by his prophets, *Isa. i. 2.* *Mic. vi. 2.* And the equity of the judgment of the great day will be attested and applauded by heaven and earth, by saints and angels, even all the holy myriads.

3. The parties summoned, *ver. 5.* *Gather my saints unto me.* This may be understood, either, (1.) Of saints indeed; Let them be gathered to God through Christ; let the few pious Israelites be set by themselves, for to them the following denunciations of wrath do not belong; rebukes to hypocrites ought not to be terrors to the upright. When God will reject the services of those that only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those that in sacrificing make a covenant with him, and so attend to, and answer the end of the institution of sacrifices. The design of the preaching of the gospel, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom, was to gather together in one the children of God, *Joh. xi. 52.* And at the second coming of Jesus Christ all his saints shall be gathered together unto him, *2 Thess. ii. 1.* to be assessors with him in the judgment, for *the saints shall judge the world*, *1 Cor. vi. 2.* Now it is here given as a character of the saints, that they have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Note, 1. Those only shall be gathered to God as his saints, who have in sincerity covenanted with him, who have taken him to be their God, and given up themselves to him to be his people, and thus have joined themselves unto the Lord. 2. It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great sacrifice, (from whom all the legal sacrifices derived what value they had) that we poor sinners can covenant with God, so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant, before we can be admitted again into covenant. Or, (2.) It may be understood of saints in profession, such as the people of Israel were, who are called a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, *Exod. xix. 6.* They were as a body politick taken into covenant with God, the covenant of peculiarity; and it was done with great solemnity by sacrifice, *Exod. xxiv. 8.* Let them come and hear what God hath to say to them; let them receive the reproofs God sends them now by his prophets, and the gospel he will in due time send them by his Son, which shall supersede the ceremonial law: And if these be slighted, let them expect to hear from God another way, and to be judged by that word which they will not be ruled by.

4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold, *ver. 6.* *The heavens shall declare his righteousness*; those heavens that were called to be witnesses to the trial, *ver. 4.* *the people in heaven shall say, Hallelujah.* True and righteous are his judgments, *Rev. xix. 1, 2.* The righteousness of God in all the rebukes of his word and providence, in the establishment of his gospel, (which brings in an everlasting righteousness, and in which the righteousness of God is revealed) and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare, *i. e.* (1.) It will be universally known and proclaimed to all the world. *As the heavens declare the glory, the wisdom and power of God creator*, *Psal. xix. 1.* so they shall no less openly declare the glory, the justice, and righteousness of God the judge; and so loud do they proclaim both, that *there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard*, as it follows there, *ver. 3.* (2.) It will be incontestibly owned and proved; who can deny what the heavens declare? Even sinners own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God. The reason given is, for God is judge himself, and therefore, (1.) He will be just; for it is impossible he should do any wrong to any of his creatures, he never did, nor ever will. When men are employed to judge for him, it is possible they may do unjustly; but when he is judge himself, there can be no injustice done. *Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance?* The apostle for this reason startles at the thought of it: God forbid! for then *how shall God judge the world?* *Rom. iii. 5, 6.* These decisions will be perfectly just, for against them there will lie no

exception, and from them there will lie no appeal. He will be justified: God is judge, and therefore he will not only execute justice, but he will oblige all to own it; for he will be clear when he judgeth, *Psal. li. 4.*

7. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. 8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, *to have been* continually before me. 9. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. 10. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. 13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? 14. Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High. 15. And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

God is here dealing with those that placed all their religion in the observances of the ceremonial law, and thought those sufficient.

1. He lays down the original contract between him and Israel, in which they had avouched him to be their God, and he them to be his people, and so both parties were agreed, *ver. 7.* *Hear, O my people, and I will speak.* Note, It is justly expected that whatever others do when he speaks, his people should give ear; who will if they do not? and then we may comfortably expect that God will speak to us when we are ready to hear what he saith, even when he testifies against us in the rebukes and threatenings of his word and providences, we must be forward to hear what he saith, to hear even *the rod, and him that has appointed it.*

2. He puts a slight upon the legal sacrifices, *ver. 8, &c.* Now, (1.) This may be considered, as looking back to the use of these under the law. God had a controversy with the Jews, but what was the ground of the controversy? not their neglect of the ceremonial institutions; no, they had not been wanting in the observance of them, their burnt-offerings had been continually before God, they took a pride in them, and hoped by their offerings to procure a dispensation for their lusts, as the adulterous woman, *Prov. vii. 14.* Their constant sacrifices they thought would both expiate and excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. Nay, if they had in some degree neglected these institutions, yet that should not have been the cause of God's quarrel with them, for it was but a small offence in comparison with the immoralities of their conversation. They thought God was mightily beholden to them for the many sacrifices they had brought to his altar, and that they had made him very much their debtor by them, as if he could not have maintained his numerous family of priests without their contributions; but God here shews them the contrary, (1.) That he did not need their sacrifices; what occasion had he for their bullocks and goats, that has the command of all *the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills?* *ver. 9, 10.* has an incontestible propriety in them, and dominion over them, has them all always under his eye, and within his reach, and can make what use he pleaseth of them; they all wait on him, and are all at his dispose, *Psal. civ. 27, 28, 29.* Can we add any thing to his store, whose all the wild fowl, and wild beasts are, the world itself, and the fulness thereof? *ver. 11, 12.* God's infinite self-sufficiency proves our utter insufficiency to add any thing to him. (2.) That he could not be benefited by their sacrifices. Their goodness of this kind could not possibly extend unto him, neither if they were in this matter righteous was he the better, *ver. 13.* *Will I eat the flesh of bulls?* It is as absurd to think that their sacrifices could of themselves, and by virtue of any innate excellency in them, add any pleasure or praise to God, as it would be to imagine that an infinite Spirit could be supported by meat and drink as our bodies are. It is said indeed of the demons to whom the Gentiles worshipped, that they did *eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drink the wine of their drink-offerings*, *Deut. xxxii. 38.* they regaled themselves in the homage they robbed the true God of; but will the great Jehovah be thus entertained? no, *to obey is better than sacrifice*, and to love God and our neighbour better than all burnt-offerings. So much better, that God by his prophets often told them that their sacrifices were not only not acceptable, but abominable to him, while they lived in sin; instead of pleasing him he looked upon them as a mockery, and therefore an affront and provocation to him, see *Prov. xv. 8.* *Isa. i. 11, &c.—lxvi. 3.* *Jer. vi. 20.* *Amos v. 21.* They are therefore here warned not to rest in these performances; but to carry themselves in all other instances towards God as their God.

(2.) This may be considered as looking forward to the abolishing of these by the gospel of Christ. Thus Dr Hammond understands it. When God shall set up the kingdom of the Messiah

Messiah, he shall abolish the old way of worship by sacrifice and offerings, he will no more have those to be *continually before him*, ver. 8. he will no more require of his worshippers to bring him their bullocks and their goats to be burnt upon his altar, ver. 9. For indeed he never appointed this as that which he had any need of, or took any pleasure in, for, besides that all we have is his already, he has far more beasts in the forest, and upon the mountains, which we know nothing of, nor, have any property in, than we have in our folds; but he instituted it to prefigure the great sacrifice which his own Son should in the fulness of time offer upon the cross, to make atonement for sin, and all the other spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, with which God through Christ will be well-pleased.

3. He directs to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise, as those which under the law were preferred before all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and on which then the greatest stress was laid, and which now under the gospel come in the room of those carnal ordinances, which were imposed until the times of reformation. He sheweth us here, ver. 14, 15. what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept, when sacrifices are slighted and superseded. (1.) We must make a penitent acknowledgment of our sins; offer to God confession, so some read it; and understand it of the confession of sin, in order to our giving glory to God, and taking shame to ourselves, that we may never return to it; *A broken and contrite heart* is the sacrifice which God will not despise, Psal. li. 17. If the sin were not abandoned, the sin-offering was not accepted. (2.) We must give God thanks for his mercies to us: offer to God thanksgiving every day, often every day, *seven times a day will I praise thee*, and upon special occasions, and this shall please the Lord, if it come from an humble thankful heart, full of love to him, and joy in him, *better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs*, Psal. lxxix. 30, 31. (3.) We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him; *Pay thy vows to the most High*, forsake thy sins, and do thy duty better, pursuant to the solemn promises thou hast made him to that purpose. When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received, we must be sure to pay the vows we made to him when we were in the pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted. Dr. Hammond applies this to the great gospel ordinance of the eucharist, in which we are to give thanks to God for his great love in sending his Son to save us, and to pay our vows of love and duty to him, and to give alms. Instead of all the Old Testament types of a Christ to come, we have that blessed memorial of a Christ already come. (4.) In the day of distress we must apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, ver. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble*, and not upon any other god: Our troubles, tho' we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him. We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. This is a cheaper, easier, readier, way of seeking his favour, than by a peace-offering, and yet more acceptable. (5.) When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him, not only by a grateful mention of his favour, but by living to his praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God; meeting him with our prayers when he afflicts us, and with our praises when he delivers us.

16. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? 17. Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. 18. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentest with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. 19. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. 20. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mothers son. 21. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such a one* as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and *there be none* to deliver. 23. Who so offereth praise, glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.

God, by the psalmist, having instructed his people in the right way of worshipping him, and keeping up their communion with him, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they were such as professed the Jewish or the Christian religion; hypocrisy is wickedness, for which God will judge. Observe here,

1. The charge drawn up against them.

(1.) They are charged with invading and usurping the honours and privileges of religion, ver. 16. *What hast thou to do*, O wicked

No. XLII.

man, to declare my statutes? This is a challenge to those that are really profane, but seemingly godly; to shew what title they have to the cloke of religion, and by what authority they wear it, when they use it only to cover and conceal the abominable impieties of their hearts and lives: Let them make out their claim to it if they can; some think it points prophetically at the Scribes and Pharisees, that were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church, at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and that evangelical way of worship, spoken of in the foregoing verses, were to be set up. They violently opposed that great revolution, and used all the power and interest which they had, by sitting in Moses's seat to hinder it; but the account which our blessed Saviour gives of them, Mat. xxiii. and St Paul, Rom. ii. 21, 22. makes this expostulation here agree very well to them. They took on them to declare God's statutes, but they hated Christ's instruction, and therefore what had they to do to expound the law, who reject the gospel? But it is applicable to all those that are practisers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be preachers of it. Note, It is very absurd in itself, and a great affront to the God of heaven, for those that are wicked and ungodly to declare his statutes, and to take his covenant in their mouths: It is very possible, and too common for those that declare God's statutes to others, to live in disobedience to them themselves; and for those that take God's covenant in their mouths, yet in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and death; but they are guilty of an usurpation, they take to themselves an honour which they have no title to, and there is a day coming when they will be thrust out as intruders, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?*

(2.) They are charged with transgressing and violating the laws and precepts of religion.

(1.) They are charged with a daring contempt of the word of God, ver. 17. *Thou hatest instruction*. They loved to give instruction, and to tell others what they should do, for this fed their pride, and made them look great, and by this craft they got their living; but they hated to receive instruction from God himself, for that would be a check upon them, and a mortification to them: Thou hatest discipline, the reproofs of the word, and the rebukes of providence. Those that hate to be reformed, no wonder they hate the means of reformation; *Thou castest my words behind thee*. They seemed to set God's words before them, when they sat in Moses's seat, and undertook to teach others out of the law, Rom. ii. 19. but in their conversations they cast God's word behind them, and did not care for seeing that rule which they were resolved not to be ruled by. This is despising the commandment of the Lord. (2.) A close confederacy with the worst of sinners, ver. 18. *When thou sawest a thief*, instead of reproving him and witnessing against him, as those should do that declare God's statutes, thou consentedst with him, did approve of his practices, and desire to come in partner with him, and to share in the profits of his cursed trade; and *thou hast been partaker with adulterers*, hast done as they do, and encouraged them to go on in their wicked courses; hast done these things, and hast *had pleasure in them that do them*, Rom. i. 32.

(3.) A constant persisting in the worst of tongue-sins, ver. 19. *Thou givest thy mouth to evil*; not only allowest thyself in, but addicest thyself wholly to, all manner of evil speaking. (1.) Lying: *Thy tongue frameth deceit*, which notes contrivance and deliberation in lying: It knits or links deceit, so some. One lie begets another, and one fraud requires another to cover it. (2.) Slandering, ver. 20. *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother*, dost basely abuse and misrepresent him; magisterially judge and censure him, and pass sentence upon him, as if thou wert his master to whom he must stand or fall, whereas he is thy brother, as good as thou art, and upon the level with thee, for he is thy own mother's son. He is thy near relation, whom thou oughtest to love, to vindicate, and stand up for, if others abused him, yet thou dost thyself abuse him, whose faults thou oughtest to cover and make the best of; if really he had done amiss, yet thou dost most falsely and unjustly charge him with that which he is innocent of; thou sittest and dost this, as a judge upon the bench with authority; thou sittest in the seat of the scornful, to deride and backbite those whom thou oughtest to respect and be kind to. Those that do ill themselves, commonly delight in speaking ill of others.

2. The proof of this charge, ver. 21. *These things thou hast done*; the fact is too plain to be denied, the fault too bad to be excused; these things, God knows, and thy own heart knows, thou hast done. The sin of sinners will be proved upon them beyond contradiction in the judgment of the great day. *I will reprove thee*, or convince thee, so that thou shalt have not one word to say for thyself. The day is coming when impenitent sinners will have their mouths for ever stopped, and be struck speechless. What confusion will they be filled with, when God shall set their sins in order before their eyes! They would not see their sins to their humiliation, but cast them behind their backs, covered them, and endeavoured to forget them, nor would they suffer their own consciences to put them in mind of them; but the day is coming, when God will make them see their sins to their everlasting shame and terror; he will set them in order, original sin, actual sins, sins against the law; sins against

against the gospel; against the first table, against the second table; sins of childhood and youth, of riper age, and old age. He will set them in order, as the witnesses are set in order, and called in order against the criminal, and asked what they have to say against him.

3. The judge's patience, and the sinner's abuse of that patience; I kept silence, did not give thee any disturbance in thy sinful way, but let thee alone to take thy course; sentence against thine evil works was respited, and not executed speedily. Note, The patience of God is very great towards provoking sinners. He sees their sins, and hates them; it would be neither difficulty nor damage to him to punish them, and yet he waits to be gracious, and gives them space to repent, that he may render them inexcusable if they repent not. His patience is the more wonderful, because the sinner makes such an ill use of it; *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself*, as weak and forgetful as thyself, as false to my word as thyself; nay, as much a friend to sin as thyself: Sinners take God's silence for consent, and his patience for connivance; and therefore the longer they are reprieved, the more are their hearts hardened; but if they turn not, they shall be made to see their error when it is too late, and that the God they provoke is just, and holy, and terrible, and not such a one as themselves.

4. The fair warning given of the dreadful doom of hypocrites, *ver. 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God.* Consider that God knows and keeps account of all your sins, that he will call you to an account for them; that patience abused will turn into the greater wrath; that tho' you forget God, and your duty to him, he will not forget you and your rebellions against him; consider this in time, before it be too late; for if these things be not considered, and the consideration of them improved, he will *tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver.* It is the doom of hypocrites to be *cut in sunder*, Mat. xxiv. 51. Note, (1.) Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked. They that know God, and yet do not obey him, do certainly forget him. (2.) Those that forget God, forget themselves; and it will be never right with them till they consider, and so recover themselves. Consideration is the first step towards conversion. (3.) Those that will not consider the warnings of God's word, will certainly be torn in pieces by the executions of his wrath. (4.) When God comes to tear sinners in pieces, there is no delivering them out of his hand. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can any friend they have in the world deliver them.

5. Full instructions given to us all how to prevent this fearful doom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, we have it, *ver. 23. which directs us what to do, that we may attain our chief end.*

(1.) Man's chief end is to glorify God, and we are here told, that who so offers praise, glorifies him, whether he be Jew or Gentile, those spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted from him. We must praise God, and we must sacrifice praise, direct it to God, as every sacrifice was; put it into the hands of the priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the altar, see that it be made by fire, sacred fire, that it be kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection; we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord. And this he is pleased in infinite condescension to interpret as the glorifying him. Hereby we give him the glory due to his name, and do what we can to advance the interests of his kingdom among men.

(2.) Man's chief end, in conjunction with this, is to enjoy God; and we are here told, that those who order their conversation aright, shall see his salvation. (1.) It is not enough for us to offer praise, but we must withal order our conversation aright. Thanksgiving is good, but thanks living is better. (2.) Those that would have their conversation right, must take care and pains to order it; to dispose it according to rule; to understand their way, and to direct it. (3.) Those that take care of their conversation make sure their salvation; them God will make to see his salvation; for it is a salvation ready to be revealed; he will make them to see it and enjoy it, to see it, and to see themselves happy for ever in it. Note, The right ordering of the conversation is the only way, and it is a sure way to obtain the great salvation.

P S A L M LI.

Tho' David penned this psalm upon a very particular occasion, yet it is of as general use as any of David's psalms; it is the most eminent of the penitential psalms, and most expressing of the cares and desires of a repenting sinner. It is pity indeed that in our devout addresses to God we should have any thing else to do but to praise God, for that is the work of heaven, but we make other work for ourselves, by our own sins and follies; we must come to the throne of grace in the posture of penitents, to confess our sins, and sue for the grace of God, and if therein we would take with us words, we can no where find any more apposite than in this psalm, which is the record of David's repentance for his sin, in the matter of Uriah, which was the greatest blemish upon

his character; all the rest of his faults were nothing to this; it is said of him, 1 Kings xv. 5. That he turned not aside from the commandment of the Lord all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. In this psalm, (1.) He confesseth his sin, ver. 3—6. (2.) He prays earnestly for the pardon of his sin, ver. 1, 2, 7, 8. (3.) For peace of conscience, ver. 8, 12. (4.) For grace to go and sin no more, ver. 10, 11, 14. (5.) For liberty of access to God, ver. 15. (6.) He promiseth to do what he could for the good of the souls of others, ver. 13. and for the glory of God, ver. 16, 17, 19. And lastly, concludes with a prayer for Sion and Jerusalem, ver. 18. Those whose consciences charge them with any gross sin, should with a believing regard to Jesus Christ, the mediator, again and again pray over this psalm; nay, tho' we have not been guilty of adultery and murder, or any the like enormous crime, yet in singing it, and praying over it, we may very sensibly apply it all to ourselves, which if we do with suitable affections, we shall through Christ find mercy to pardon, and grace for seasonable help.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

1. **H**A VE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

The title has reference to a very sad story, that of David's fact: But tho' he fell, he was not utterly cast down, for God graciously upheld him, and raised him up. (1.) This sin which in this psalm he laments, was the folly and wickedness he committed with his neighbour's wife; a sin not to be spoken of, or thought of, without detestation. His debauching Bathsheba was the inlet to all the other sins that followed; it was as the letting forth of water. This sin of David's is recorded for warning to all, that he that thinks he stands, may take heed lest he fall. (2.) The repentance in this psalm he expresseth he was brought to by the ministry of Nathan, who was sent of God to convince him of his sin, after he had continued above nine months (for ought appears) without any particular expressions of remorse and sorrow for it. But tho' God may suffer his people to fall into sin, and to lie a great while in it, yet he will by some means or other recover them to repentance, bring them to himself, and to their right mind again. Herein ordinarily he useth the ministry of the word, which yet he is not tied to: But those that have been overtaken in any fault, ought to reckon a faithful reproof the greatest kindness that can be done them, and a wise reprover their best friend. *Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be excellent oil.* (3.) David being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backslidden, and who alone can heal their backslidings? (4.) What were the workings of his heart towards God upon this occasion, by divine inspiration he drew up into a psalm, that it might be often repeated, and long after reviewed; and this he committed to the chief musician, to be sung in the publick service of the church, (1.) As a profession of his own repentance, which he would have to be generally taken notice of; his sin having been notorious, that the plaister might be as wide as the wound. Those that truly repent of their sins, will not be ashamed to own their repentance; but having lost the honour of innocents, will rather covet the honour of penitents. (2.) As a pattern to others, both to bring them to repentance by his example, and to instruct them in their repentance, what to do, and what to say. Being converted himself, he thus *strengthens his brethren*, Luke xxii. 32. and for this cause he obtained mercy, 1 Tim. i. 16.

In these words we have,

1. David's humble petition, *ver. 1, 2.* His prayer is much the same with that which our Saviour puts into the mouth of his penitent publican in the parable, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Luke xviii. 13. David was upon many accounts a man of great merit; he had not only done much, but suffered much in the cause of God: and yet when he is convinced of sin, he doth not offer to balance his evil deeds with his good deeds, nor can he think that his services will atone for his offences; but he flies to

to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* He owns himself obnoxious to God's justice, and therefore casts himself upon his mercy; and it is certain the best man in the world is undone, if God be not merciful to him. Observe,

(1.) What his plea is for this mercy. *Have mercy upon me, O God,* not according to the dignity of my birth, as descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, not according to my publick services as Israel's champion, or my publick honours as Israel's king; his plea is not, Lord, remember David and all his afflictions, how he vowed to build a place for the ark, *Psal. cxxxii. 1, 2.* A true penitent will make no mention of any such thing, but have mercy upon me for mercy's sake. I have nothing to plead with thee but (1.) The freeness of thy mercy, according to thy loving-kindness, thy clemency, the goodness of thy nature, which inclines thee to pity the miserable. (2.) The fulness of thy mercy. There is in thee not only loving kindness and tender mercies, but abundance of it, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners, of many sins, to multiply pardons as we multiply transgressions.

(2.) What is the particular mercy he begs; the pardon of sin: *Blot out my transgressions,* as a debt is blotted or crossed out of the book, when either the debtor has paid it, or the creditor has remitted it; wipe out my transgressions, that they may not appear to demand judgment against me, nor stare me in the face to my confusion and terror. The blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify and pacify that, blots out the transgression, and being reconciled to God, reconciles us to ourselves, *ver. 2.* *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity;* wash my soul from the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace, for it is only from a ceremonial pollution, that the water of separation will avail to cleanse me. Multiply to wash me; the stain is deep, for I have lain long soaking in the guilt, so that it will not easily be got out; O wash me much, wash me thoroughly; *cleanse me from my sin.* Sin defiles us, renders us odious in the sight of the holy God, and uneasy to ourselves, it disfits us for communion with God in grace or glory; when God pardons sin he cleanseth us from it, so that we become acceptable to him, easy to ourselves, and have liberty of access to him. Nathan had assured David upon his first profession of repentance, that his sin was pardoned, *The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die,* 2 Sam. xii. 13. yet he prays, *Wash me, cleanse me, blot out my transgressions,* for God will be sought unto, even for that which he has promised; and those whose sins are pardoned, must pray that the pardon may be more and more cleared up to them. God hath forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself, and therefore he is thus importunate for pardon, as one that thought himself unworthy of it, and knew how to value it.

2. David's penitential confessions, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* (1.) He was very free to own his guilt before God; *I acknowledge my transgressions;* this he had formerly found the only way of easing his conscience, *Psal. xxxii. 4, 5.* Nathan said, *Thou art the man;* and so I am, saith David, *I have sinned.* (2.) He had such a deep sense of it, that he was continually thinking of it with sorrow and shame. His contrition for his sin was not a flighty, sudden, passion, but an abiding grief; *my sin is ever before me,* to humble me and mortify me, and make me continually blush and tremble. It is ever against me, so some; I see it before me as an enemy, accusing and threatening me. David was upon all occasions put in mind of his sin, and was willing to be so for his further abatement. He never walked on the roof of his house without a penitent reflection on his unhappy walk there, when from thence he saw Bathsheba; never lay down to sleep without a sorrowful thought of the bed of his uncleanness; never sat down to meat, never sent his servant on an errand, or took his pen in hand, but it put him in mind of his making Uriah drunk, the treacherous message he sent him, and the fatal warrant he wrote and signed for his execution. Note, The acts of repentance, even for the same sin, must be oft repeated: It will be of good use for us to have our sins ever before us, that by the remembrance of our past sins, we may be kept humble, may be armed against temptation, quickened to duty, and made patient under the cross.

(1.) He confesseth his actual transgressions, *ver. 4.* *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* David was a very great man, and yet having done amiss, submits to the discipline of a penitent, and thinks not his royal dignity will excuse him from it. Rich and poor must here meet together; there is one law of repentance for both; the greatest must be judged shortly, and therefore must judge themselves now. David was a very good man, and yet having sinned, he willingly accommodates himself to the place and posture of a penitent. The best men, if they sin, should give the best example of repentance.

(1.) His confession is particular; *I have done this evil,* this that I am now reprov'd for, this that my own conscience now upbraids me with. Note, It is good to be particular in the confession of sin, that we may be the more express in praying for pardon, and so may have the more comfort in it. We ought to reflect upon the particular heads of our sins of infirmity, and the particular circumstances of our gross sins.

(2.) He aggravates the sin which he confesseth, and laid load upon himself for it; *Against thee, and in thy sight.* Hence our Saviour seems to borrow the confession, which in the parable he puts into the mouth of the returning prodigal; *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,* Luke xv. 18. Two things David laments in his sin. (1.) That it was committed against God. To him the affront is given, and he is the party wronged. It is his truth, that by wilful sin we deny; his conduct that we despise; his command that we disobey; his promise that we distrust; his name that we dishonour; and it is with him that we deal deceitfully and disingenuously. From this topick Joseph fetched the great argument against sin, *Gen. xxxix. 9.* and David here the great aggravation of it; *against thee only.* Some make this to speak the prerogative of his crown, that as a king he was not accountable to any but God; but it is more agreeable to his present temper to suppose, that it speaks the deep contrition of his soul for his sin, and that it was upon right grounds. He here sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah; against his own soul and body, and family; against his kingdom, and against the church of God, and all this helped to humble him; but none of these were sinned against so as God was; and therefore this he lays the most sorrowful accent upon; *Against thee only have I sinned.* (2.) That it was committed in God's sight; this not only proves it upon me, but renders it exceeding sinful. This should greatly humble us for all our sins, that they have been committed under the eye of God, which argues either a disbelief of his omniscience, or a contempt of his justice.

(3.) He justifies God in the sentence passed upon him, for that *the sword shall never depart from his house,* 2 Sam. xii. 10, 11. He is very forward to own his sin, and aggravate it, not only that he might obtain the pardon of it himself, but that by his confession he might give honour to God. (1.) That God might be justified in the threatnings he had spoken by Nathan; Lord, I have nothing to say against the justice of them; I deserve what is threatened, and a thousand times worse. Thus Eli acquiesced in the like threatnings, 1 Sam. iii. 19. *It is the Lord.* And Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 19. *Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken.* (2.) That God may be clear when he judgeth, i. e. when he executes those threatnings. David published his confession of sin, that when hereafter he should come into trouble, none might say, God had done him any wrong, for he owns the Lord is righteous; thus will all true penitents justify God, by condemning themselves; *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us.*

(2.) He confesseth his original corruption, *ver. 5.* *Behold I was shapen in iniquity.* He doth not call upon God to behold it, but upon himself: Come, my soul, look unto the rock out of which I was hewn, and thou wilt find I was shapen in iniquity. Had I duly considered this before, I find I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such tinder in my heart, and so the sin might have been prevented; but let me consider it now, not to excuse or extenuate the sin, Lord I did so, but indeed I could not help it, my inclination led me to it. For as that plea is false, with due care and watchfulness, and improvement of the grace of God, he might have helped it, so it is what a true penitent never offers to put in; but let me consider it rather as an aggravation of the sin; Lord, I have not only been guilty of adultery and murder, but I have an adulterous, murderous nature; therefore I abhor myself. David elsewhere speaks of the admirable structure of his body, *Psal. cxxxix. 14, 15.* it was curiously wrought, and yet here he saith it was shapen in iniquity; sin was twisted in with it, not as it came out of God's hands, but as it comes through our parents loins. He elsewhere speaks of the piety of his mother, that she was God's handmaid, and he pleads his relation to her, *Psal. cxvi. 16.*—*lxxxvi. 16.* and yet here he saith, she conceived him in sin; for tho' she was by grace a child of God, she was by nature a daughter of Eve, and not excepted from the common character. Note, It is to be sadly lamented by every one of us, that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude; we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call original sin, because it is as antient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, that proneness to evil, and backwardness to good, which is the burthen of the regenerate, and the ruin of the unregenerate; it is a bent to backslide from God.

3. David's acknowledgment of the grace of God, *ver. 6.* both his good will towards us; *thou desirest truth in the inward parts;* thou wouldst have us all honest and sincere, and true to our profession; and his good work in us. In the hidden part thou hast made, or shalt make me to know wisdom. Note, 1. Truth and wisdom will go very far towards making a man a good man. A clear head and a sound heart bespeak the man of God perfect; sincerity and prudence. 2. What God requires of us he himself works in us, and he works it in the regular way, enlightening the mind, and so gaining the will. But how doth this come in here? (1.) God is hereby justified and cleared; Lord,

Lord, thou wast not the author of my sin; there is no blame to be laid upon thee; but I alone must bear it; for thou hast many a time admonished me to be sincere, and hast made me to know that, which if I had duly considered, would have prevented my falling into this sin; had I improved the grace thou hast given me, I had kept my integrity. (2.) The sin is hereby aggravated; Lord, thou desirest truth, but where was it when I dissembled with Uriah? *Thou hast made me to know wisdom*; but I have not lived up to what I have known. (3.) He is hereby encouraged in his repentance, to hope that God would graciously accept of him; for, 1. God had made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly again; *Thou desirest truth in the inward part*; this is that which God has an eye to in a returning sinner, that *in his spirit there be no guile*, Psal. xxxii. 2. And David was conscious to himself of the uprightness of his heart towards God in his repentance, and therefore doubted not but God would accept him. 2. He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions, that in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the *hidden man of the heart*, 1 Pet. iii. 4. he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter another time. Some read it as a prayer; Lord, in this instance I have done foolishly, for the future make me to know wisdom. Where there is truth, God will give wisdom; those that sincerely endeavour to do their duty, shall be taught their duty.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8. Make me to hear joy and gladness: *that the bones which thou hast broken, may rejoice*. 9. Hide thy face from my sins; and blot out all mine iniquities. 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. 12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free spirit. 13. *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

See here, (1.) What David prays for; many excellent petitions he here puts up, to which if we but add for Christ's sake, they are as evangelical as any other.

1. He prays that God would cleanse him from his sins, and the defilement he had contracted by them, *ver. 7. Purge me with hyssop, i. e. Pardon my sins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be restored to those privileges, which by sin I had forfeited and lost.* The expression here alludes to a ceremonial distinction, that of cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean by the touch of a body, by sprinkling water, or blood, or both, upon them with a bunch of hyssop, by which they were at length discharged from the restraints they were laid under by their pollution: Lord, let me be as well assured of my restoration to thy favour, and to the privilege of communion with thee, as they were thereby assured of their re-admission to their former privileges. But it is founded upon gospel-grace, *purge me with hyssop, i. e. with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop.* It is the blood of Christ, which is therefore called *the blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. that purgeth the conscience from dead works, from that guilt of sin, and dread of God, which shuts us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body under the law shut a man out from the courts of God's house. If this blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, *then we shall be clean* indeed, Heb. x. 2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow; not only acquitted, but accepted; so those are that are justified, *Isa. i. 18. Tho' your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.*

2. He prays, that his sins being pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted till first he is cleansed: but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, *make me to hear joy and gladness*, *ver. 8. i. e. let me have a well-grounded peace of thy creating, thy speaking, so that the bones which thou hast broken by convictions and threatenings may rejoice, may not only be set again, and eased from the pain, but may be sensibly comforted, and, as the prophet speaks, may flourish as an herb.* Note, (1.) The pain of an heart truly broken for sin, may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same spirit who as a spirit of bondage smites and wounds, and as a spirit of adoption heals and binds up. (2.) The comfort and joy that ariseth from a sealed pardon to a penitent sinner is as refreshing as perfect ease from the most exquisite pain. (3.) It is God's work not only to speak this joy and gladness, but to make us hear it, and take the comfort of it. He earnestly desires that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and so put gladness into his heart, that he would not only be reconciled to him, but, which is a further act of grace, let him know that he was so.

3. He prays for a compleat and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for, as the foundation of his comfort, *ver. 9. Hide thy face from my sins, i. e. be not provoked by them to deal with me as I deserve; they are ever before me, let them be cast behind thy back; blot out all mine iniquities out of the book of thine account; blot them out, as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun, Isa. xlv. 22.*

4. He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for, as for pardon and peace, *ver. 10. He doth not pray, Lord, preserve me my reputation, as Saul, I have sinned, yet honour me before this people:* No, his great concern is to get his corrupt nature changed; the sin he had been guilty of, was (1.) An evidence of its impurity, and therefore he prays, *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* He now saw more than ever what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his own power to amend it, and therefore begs of God (whose prerogative it is to create) that he would create in him a clean heart. He only that made the heart can new make it; and to his power nothing is impossible: He created the world by the word of his power, as the God of nature, and it is by the word of his power as the God of grace, that *we are clean*, John xv. 3. that *we are sanctified*, John xvii. 17. (2.) It was the cause of its disorder, and undid much of the good work that had been wrought in him, and therefore he prays, *Lord, renew a right spirit within me*; repair the decays of spiritual strength, which this sin has been the cause of, and set me to rights again. Renew a constant spirit within me; so some. He had in this matter discovered much inconstancy and disagreeableness with himself, and therefore prays, Lord fix me for the time to come, that I may never in like manner depart from thee.

5. He prays for the continuance of God's good will towards him, and the progress of his good work in him, *ver. 11. (1.) That he might never be shut out from God's favour. Cast me not away from thy presence, as one whom thou abhorrest, and canst not endure to look upon.* He prays, that he might not be thrown out of God's protection, but that wherever he went, he might have the divine presence with him, might be under the conduct of his wisdom, and in the custody of his power; and that he might not be forbidden communion with God: Let me not be banished thy courts, but always have liberty of access to thee, by prayer. He doth not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him, God's will be done; but, Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. If the sword come into my house never to depart from it, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and I am well enough. (2.) That he might never be deprived of God's grace: *Take not thy holy spirit from me.* He knew he had by his sin grieved the Spirit, and provoked him to withdraw; and that because he also is flesh, God might justly have said that his Spirit should no more strive with him, or work upon him, *Gen. vi. 3.* This he dreads more than any thing; we are undone if God take his holy Spirit from us. Saul was a sad instance of this: How exceeding sinful, how exceeding miserable was he, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him! David knew it, and therefore begs thus earnestly, Lord, whatever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet *take not thy holy spirit from me*, (see 2 Sam. vii. 15.) but continue thy holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty both as a prince and as a psalmist.

6. He prays for the restoration of divine comforts, and the perpetual communications of divine grace, *ver. 12.* David finds two ill effects of his sin: (1.) It had made him sad, and therefore he prays, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.* A child of God knows no true nor solid joy, but the joy of God's salvation, joy in God his Saviour, and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy, and deprive ourselves of it; our evidences cannot but be clouded, and our hopes shaken; when we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But when we truly repent, we may pray and hope that God will restore to us those joys. They that sow in penitential tears, shall reap in the joys of God's salvation, when the times of refreshing shall come. (2.) It had made him weak, and therefore he prays, *Uphold me with thy free spirit*: I am ready to fall, either into sin or into despair, Lord, sustain me; my own spirit (tho' the spirit of a man will go far towards the sustaining his infirmity) is not sufficient; but if I be left to myself, I shall certainly sink, therefore uphold me with thy Spirit, let him counter-work the evil spirit that would cast me down from mine excellency. Thy Spirit is a free spirit, a free agent himself, working freely; and that makes those free whom he works upon, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; thy ingenuous princely Spirit: He was conscious to himself of his acting very disingenuously in the matter of Uriah, and unlike a prince; that his behaviour was base and paltry: Lord, faith he, let thy Spirit inspire my soul with noble and generous principles, that I may always act as becomes me. A free spirit will be a firm and fixed spirit, and will uphold us. The more chearful we are in our duty, the more constant we shall be to it.

(2.) See what David here promiseth, *ver. 13.* Observe, (1.) What good work he promiseth God to do; *I will teach transgressors thy ways.* David had been himself a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves, having himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance; to teach others God's ways, *i. e.* our way to God by repentance; he would teach others that had sinned, to take the same course that he had taken, to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God's face; and God's way towards us in pardoning mercy, how ready he is to receive those that return to him. He taught the former by his own example for the direction of sinners in repenting: He taught the latter by his own experience for their encouragement. By this psalm he is, and will be to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. Note, Penitents should be preachers; Solomon was so, and blessed Paul. (2.) What good effect he promiseth himself from his doing this; *Sinners shall be converted unto thee,* and shall neither persist in their wanderings from thee, nor despair of finding mercy in their returns to thee. The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors, is their conversion to God, that is a happy point gained, and happy they that are instrumental to contribute towards it, *Jam. v. 20.*

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. 15. O LORD, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. 16. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offerings. 17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

1. David prays against the guilt of sin, and prays for the grace of God, and enforceth both petitions with a plea taken from the glory of God, which he promiseth with thankfulness to shew forth.

(1.) He prays against the guilt of sin, that he might be delivered from that, and promiseth that then he would praise God, *ver. 14.* The particular sin he prays against is blood-guiltiness, the sin he had now been guilty of, having slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. Hitherto, perhaps, he had stopped the mouth of conscience with that frivolous excuse, that he did not kill him himself: but now he was convinced that he was the murderer, and hearing the blood cry to God for vengeance, he cries to God for mercy, *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, i. e.* Let me not lie under the guilt of that kind I have contracted, but let it be pardoned to me, and let me never be left to myself to contract the like guilt again. Note, It concerns us all to pray earnestly against the guilt of blood. In this prayer he eyes God as the God of salvation. Note, Those to whom God is the God of salvation, he will deliver from guilt, for the salvation he is the God of is salvation from sin: We may therefore plead this with him, Lord, thou art the God of my salvation, therefore deliver me from the dominion of sin. He promiseth, that if God would deliver him, *his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness, i. e.* God should have the glory both of pardoning mercy, and of preventing grace. God's righteousness is often put for his grace, especially in the great business of justification and sanctification. This he would comfort himself in, and therefore sing of it; and this he would endeavour both to acquaint and to affect others with; he would sing aloud of it. This all those should do that have had the benefit of it, and owe their all to it.

(2.) He prays for the grace of God, and promiseth to improve that grace to his glory, *ver. 15.* O Lord, open thou my lips, not only that I may teach and instruct sinners, which the best preacher cannot do to any purpose, unless God give him the opening of the mouth, and the tongue of the learned, but *that my mouth may shew forth thy praise;* not only that I may have abundant matter for praise, but an heart enlarged in praise. Guilt had closed his lips, had gone near to stop the mouth of prayer, he could not for shame, he could not for fear, come into the presence of that God whom he knew he had offended, much less speak to him; his heart condemned him, and therefore he had little confidence towards God: It cast a damp particularly upon his praises; when he had lost the joys of his salvation, his harp was hung upon the willow-trees, therefore he prays, *Lord, open my lips,* put my heart in tune for praise again. To them that are tongue-tied by reason of guilt, the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins faith effectually *Ephphata, Be opened;* and when the lips are opened, what should they speak but the praises of God? as Zacharias did, *Luke i. 64.*

2. David offers the sacrifice of a penitent, contrite heart, as that which he knew God would be pleased with.

No. xlii.

(1.) He knew very well that the sacrificing of beasts was in itself of no account with God, *ver. 16.* *Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it thee* with all my heart to obtain pardon and peace, but *thou delightest not in burnt-offering.* Here see how fond David would have been to give thousands of rams to make atonement for sin. Those that are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger by reason of sin, would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it, *Micah vi. 6, 7.* But see how little God valued this! As trials of obedience, and types of Christ, he did indeed require sacrifices to be offered; but he had no delight in them for any intrinsic worth or value they had: *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not:* As they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, any otherwise than as the offering of them is expressive of love and duty to him.

(1.) He knew also how acceptable true repentance is to God, *ver. 17.* *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* See here, (1.) What the good work is that is wrought in every true penitent. A broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. It is a work wrought upon the heart; that is it that God looks at, and requires in all religious exercises, particularly in the exercises of repentance. It is a sharp work wrought there, no less than the breaking of the heart; not in despair, as we say, when a man's undone his heart is broke; but in necessary humiliation, and sorrow for sin. It is a heart breaking with itself, and breaking from its sin; it is a heart pliable to the word of God, and patient under the rod of God; a heart subdued and brought into obedience; it is a heart that is tender, like Josiah's, and trembles at God's word. Oh that there was such a heart in us! (2.) How graciously God is pleased to accept of this. It is the sacrifices of God, not one, but many, it is instead of all burnt-offering and sacrifice. The breaking of Christ's body for sin is the only sacrifice of atonement, for no sacrifice but that could take away sin: but the breaking of our hearts for sin is a sacrament of acknowledgment, a sacrifice of God, for to him it is offered up; he requires it, he prepares it, (he provides this lamb for a burnt-offering) and he will accept of it. That which pleased God was not the feeding of a beast, and making much of it, but killing it; so it is not the pampering of our flesh, but the mortifying of it, that God will accept. The sacrifice was bound, was bled, was burnt; so the penitent heart is bound by convictions, bleeds in contrition, and then burns in holy zeal against sin, and for God. The sacrifice was offered upon the altar, that sanctified the gift; so the broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him; and this is the sacrifice which he will not despise. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despised the sacrifice of torn and broken beasts, but he will not despise that of a torn and broken heart. He will not overlook it, he will not refuse or reject it; tho' it make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he doth not despise it. The proud Pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican, and he thought very meanly of himself; but God did not despise him. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth to look with favour upon a *broken and contrite heart,* *Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.—lvii. 15.*

3. David intercedes for Sion and Jerusalem, with an eye to the honour of God. See what a concern he had,

1. For the good of the church of God, *ver. 16.* *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, i. e.* (1.) To all the particular worshippers in Sion, to all that love and fear thy name; keep them from falling into such wounding wasting sins as these of mine; defend and succour all that fear thy name. Those that have been in spiritual troubles themselves, know how to pity and pray for those that are in like manner afflicted. Or (2.) To the publick interests of Israel. David was sensible of the wrong he had done to Judah and Jerusalem by his sin; how it had weakened the hands, and saddened the hearts of good people, and opened the mouths of their adversaries; he was likewise afraid lest, he being a publick person, his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom, and therefore he prays to God to secure and advance those publick interests which he had damaged and endangered. He prays, that God would prevent those national judgments which his sin had deserved, that he would continue those blessings, and carry on that good work which it had threatened to retard and put a stop to. He prays not only God would do good to Sion, as he did to other places by his providence, but that he would do it in his good pleasure, with the peculiar favour he bore to that place which he had chosen to put his name there; that the walls of Jerusalem, which perhaps were now in the building, might be built up, and that good work finished. Note, (1.) When we have most business of our own, and of greatest importance at the throne of grace, yet then we must not forget to pray for the church of God; nay, our Master has taught us in our daily prayers to begin with that, *Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.* (2.) The consideration of the prejudice we have done to the publick interests by our sins, should engage us to do them all the service we can, particularly by our prayers.

2. For the honour of the churches of God, *ver. 19.* If God would shew himself reconciled to him and his people, as he had prayed, then they should go on with the publick services of his house; (1.) Cheerfully to themselves. The sense of God's goodness to them would enlarge their hearts in all the instances and

expressions of thankfulness and obedience. They will then come to his tabernacle with burnt-offerings, with whole burnt-offerings, which were intended purely for the glory of God, and they shall offer not lambs and rams only, but bullocks, the costliest sacrifices upon his altar.

(2.) Acceptably to God; *Thou shalt be pleased with them*, i. e. we shall have reason to hope so, when we perceive the sin taken away, which threatened to hinder thine acceptance. Note, It is a great comfort to a good man to think of the communion that is between God and his people in their publick assemblies; how he is honoured by their humble attendance on him, and they are happy in his gracious acceptance of them.

P S A L M LII.

David, no doubt, was in very great grief, when he said to Abiathar, 1 Sam. xxii. 22. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house, which were put to death upon Doeg's malicious information; to give some vent to that grief, and to gain some relief to his mind under it, he penned this psalm, wherein as a prophet, and therefore with as good an authority as if he had been now a prince upon the throne. (1.) He arraigns Doeg for what he had done, ver. 1. (2.) He accuseth him, convicts him, and aggravates his crimes, ver. 2, 3, 4. (3.) He passeth sentence upon him, ver. 5. (4.) He foretels the triumphs of the righteous in the execution of the sentence, ver. 6, 7. (5.) He comforts himself in the mercy of God, and the assurance he had that he should yet praise him, ver. 8, 9. In singing this psalm we should conceive a detestation of the sin of lying, foresee the ruin of those that persist in it, and please ourselves with the assurance of the preservation of God's church and people, in spite of all the malicious designs of the children of Satan, that father of lies.

¶ To the chief musician, Maschil, *A psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.*

1. **W**H Y boasteth thou thy self in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God *endureth* continually. 2. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs: like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. 3. Thou lovest evil more than good: *and* lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. 4. Thou lovest all devouring words, O *thou* deceitful tongue. 5. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

The title is a brief account of the story which the psalm refers to. David now at length saw it necessary to quit the court, and shift for his own safety for fear of Saul, who had once and again attempted to murder him. Being unprovided of arms and victuals, he by a wile got Ahimelech, the priest, to furnish him with both; Doeg an Edomite happened to be there, and he went and informed Saul against Ahimelech, representing him as confederate with a traitor; upon which accusation Saul grounded a very bloody warrant, to kill all the priests, and Doeg, who was the prosecutor, was the executioner, 1 Sam. xxii. 9, &c.

In these verses,

1. David argues the case fairly with this proud and mighty man, ver. 1. Doeg, it is probable, was mighty in respect of bodily strength; but if he were, he gained no reputation to it by his easy victory over the unarmed priests of the Lord; it is no honour for those that wear a sword to hector those that wear an ephod. However he was by his office a mighty man, for he was set over the servants of Saul, chamberlain of the household. This was he that boasted himself not only in the power he had to do mischief, but in the mischief he did. Note, It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to brag of it, and glory in it when we have done; not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to justify it, not only to justify it but to magnify it, and value ourselves upon it. They that glory in their sin, glory in their shame; and then it becomes yet more shameful; mighty men are often mischievous men, and *boast of their hearts desire*, Psal. x. 3. It is uncertain how the following words come in; *The goodness of God endureth continually*. Some make it the wicked man's answer to this question; the patience and forbearance of God, that great instance of his goodness is abused by sinners, to the hardning of their hearts in their wicked ways; because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily; nay, God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast in mischief; as if their prosperity in their wickedness were an evidence that there is no harm in it; but it is rather to be taken

as an argument against him, to shew, (1.) The sinfulness of his sin; God is continually doing good, and those that therein are like him, have reason to glory in their being so; but thou art continually doing mischief, and therein art utterly unlike him, and contrary to him, and yet gloriest in being so. (2.) The folly of it; thou thinkest with the mischief which thou boastest of, the artful contriving of, and successful carrying on of, to run down and ruin the people of God; but thou wilt find thy self mistaken, *the goodness of God endureth continually* for their preservation, and then they need not fear what man can do unto them. The enemies in vain boast in their mischief, while we have God's mercy to boast in.

2. He draws up a high charge against him in the court of heaven, as he had drawn up a high charge against Ahimelech in Saul's court, ver. 2, 3, 4. He accuseth him of the wickedness of his tongue, that unruly evil full of deadly poison; and the wickedness of his heart, which that was an evidence of. Four things he charges him with. (1.) Malice; his tongue doth mischief, not only pricking like a needle, but cutting like a sharp razor. Scornful bantering words would not content him, he loved devouring words, words that would ruin the priests of the Lord, whom he hated. (2.) Falshood; it was a deceitful tongue that he did this mischief with, ver. 4. he loved lying, ver. 3. and this sharp razor did work deceitfully, ver. 2. i. e. before he had this occasion given him to discover his malice against the priests, he had carried it very plausibly towards them; tho' he were an Edomite, he attended the altars, and brought his offerings, and paid his respects to the priests, as decently as any Israelite; tho' therein he put a force upon himself, for he was detained before the Lord; but herein he gained an opportunity of doing them so much the greater mischief. Or it may refer to the information itself, which he gave in against Ahimelech; for the matter of fact was in substance true, yet it was misrepresented, and false colours put upon it; and therefore he might well be said to love lying, and to have a deceitful tongue. He told the truth, but not all the truth, as a witness ought to do; had he told that David made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon Saul's errand, the kindness he shewed him would have appeared to be not only not traitorous against Saul, but respectful to him. It will not save us from the guilt of lying, to be able to say, there was some truth in what we said, if we pervert it, and make it to appear otherwise than it was. (3.) Subtily in sin; *thy tongue deviseth mischiefs*, i. e. it speaks the mischief which thy heart deviseth. The more there is of craft and contrivance in any wickedness, the more there is of the devil in it. (4.) Affection to sin; *thou lovest evil more than good*, i. e. thou lovest evil, and hast no love at all to that which is good; thou takest delight in lying, and makest no conscience of doing right. Thou wouldst rather please Saul, by telling a lie, than please God by speaking truth. Those are of Doeg's spirit, who, instead of being pleased (as we ought all to be) with an opportunity of doing a man kindness in his body, estate, or good name, are glad when they have a fair occasion to do a man a mischief, and readily close with an opportunity of that kind; that is loving evil more than good. It is bad to speak devouring words, but it is worse to love them, either in others or in ourselves.

3. He reads his doom, and denounceth the judgments of God against him for his wickedness, ver. 5. Thou hast destroyed the priests of the Lord, and cut them off, and therefore *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever*; sons of perdition actively, shall be sons of perdition passively, as Judas and the man of sin. Destroyers shall be destroyed; those especially that hate and persecute, and destroy the priests of the Lord, his ministers and people, who are made to our God priests, a royal priesthood, shall be taken away with a swift and everlasting destruction. Doeg is here condemned; (1.) To be driven out of the church; *he shall pluck thee out of the tabernacle*, not thy dwelling-place but God's; so it is most probably understood. Thou shalt be cut off from the favour of God, and his presence, and all communion with him, and shall have no benefit, either by oracle or offering. Justly was he deprived of all the privileges of God's house, that had been so mischievous to his servants; he had come sometimes to God's tabernacle, and attended in his courts, but he was detained there, he was sick of his service, and sought an opportunity to defame his family; it was very fit therefore he should be taken away, and plucked out from thence; we would forbid one our house that should serve us so. Note, We forfeit the benefit of ordinances if we make an ill use of them. (2.) To be driven out of the world; *He shall root thee out of the land of the living*, in which thou thoughtest thyself so deeply rooted. When good men die, they are transplanted from the land of the living on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall take root for ever; but when wicked men die, they are rooted out of the land of the living, to perish for ever; as fuel to the fire of divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God.

6. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him. 7. Lo, *this is the man that made not* God

God his strength: but trusted in the abundance of his riches, *and* strengthened himself in his wickedness. 8. But I *am* like a green olive-tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. 9. I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name, for *it is* good before thy saints.

David was at this time in great distress, the mischief Doeg had done him, was but the beginning of his sorrows; and yet here we have him triumphing, and that is more than rejoicing, in tribulation. Blessed Paul, in the midst of his troubles, is in the midst of his triumphs, 2 Cor. ii. 14. David here triumphs,

1. In the fall of Doeg; yet lest this should look like personal revenge, he doth not speak of it as his own act; but the language of other righteous persons. They shall observe God's judgments on Doeg, and speak of them; (1.) To the glory of God; they shall see and fear, *ver. 6. i. e.* they shall reverence the justice of God, and stand in awe of him, as a God of almighty power, before whom the proudest sinner cannot stand, and before whom therefore we ought every one of us to humble ourselves. Note, God's judgments on the wicked should strike an awe upon the righteous, and make them afraid of offending God, and incurring his displeasure, *Psal. cxix. 120. Rev. xv. 3, 4.*

(2.) To the shame of Doeg. They shall laugh at him, not with a ludicrous, but a rational serious laughter, as *he that sits in heaven shall laugh at him*, *Psal. ii. 4.* He shall appear ridiculous and worthy to be laughed at. We are told how they shall triumph in God's just judgments on him, *ver. 7. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength*; the fall and ruin of a wealthy mighty man, cannot but be generally taken notice of, and every one is apt to make his remarks upon it; now this is the remark which the righteous should make upon Doeg's fall, that no better could come of it, since he took the wrong method of establishing himself in his wealth and power. If a new erected fabrick tumbles down, presently every one enquires where was the fault in the building of it. Now that which ruined Doeg's prosperity, was, (1.) That he did not build it upon a rock; *he made not God his strength*, i. e. he did not think that the continuance of his prosperity, depended upon the favour of God, and therefore took no care to make sure that favour, nor to keep himself in God's love, made no conscience of his duty to him, nor sought him in the least. Those wretchedly deceive themselves, that think to support themselves in their power and wealth, without God and religion. (2.) That he did build it upon the sand. He thought his wealth would support itself, he trusted in the abundance of his riches, which he imagined were laid up for many years; nay, he thought his wickedness would help to support it; he was resolved to stick at nothing for the securing and advancing of his honour and power; right or wrong he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way; and this he thought would strengthen him; they may have any thing that will make conscience of nothing. But now see what it comes to; see what untempered mortar he built his house with, now it is fallen, and himself buried in the ruins of it.

2. In his own stability, *ver. 8, 9.* This mighty man is plucked up by the roots, *But I am like a green olive-tree*, planted and rooted, fixed and flourishing; he is turned out of God's dwelling-place, but I am established in it, not detained as Doeg, by any thing but the abundant satisfaction I meet with there. Note, Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God, shall be like green olive trees there; the wicked are said to flourish like a green bay-tree, *Psal. xxxvii. 35.* which bears no useful fruit, tho' it have abundance of large leaves; but the righteous flourish like a green olive-tree, which is fat as well as flourishing, *Psal. lxxxii. 14.* and with its fatness honours God and man, *Judg. ix. 9.* deriving its root and fatness from the good olive, *Rom. xi. 17.*

Now what must we do that we may be as green olive-trees?

1. We must live a life of faith, and holy confidence in God and his grace. I see what comes of mens trusting in the abundance of their riches, and therefore *I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever*, not in the world, but in God; not in my own merit, but in God's mercy; which dispenseth its gifts freely, even to the unworthy, and has in it an all-sufficiency to be our portion and happiness. This mercy is for ever, it is constant and unchangeable, and its gifts will continue to all eternity; we must therefore for ever trust in it, and never come off from that bottom.

2. We must live a life of thankfulness, and holy joy in God, *ver. 9. I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it*, hast avenged the blood of thy priests upon their bloody enemy, and given him blood to drink; and hast performed thy promise to me, which he was as sure would be done in due time, as if it were done already. It contributes very much to the beauty of our profession, and to our fruitfulness, in every grace, to be much

in praising God, and it is certain we never want matter for praise.

3. We must live a life of expectation, and humble dependence upon God; *I will wait on thy name*, i. e. I will attend upon thee in all those ways wherein thou hast made thy self known, hoping for the discoveries of thy favour to me, and willing to tarry till the time appointed for them; for it is good before thy saints; or, in the opinion and judgment of thy saints, with whom David heartily concurs. All the saints are of this mind; it is the *communis sensus fidelium*. (1.) That God's name is good in itself. That God's manifestations of himself to his people, are gracious, and very kind; there is no other name given but his, that would be our refuge, and strong tower. (2.) That it is very good for us to wait on that name; that there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits when they are ruffled and disturbed, and to keep us in the way of duty, when we are tempted to use any indirect courses for our own relief, than to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord, *Lam. iii. 26.* All the saints have experienced the benefit of it, who never attended him in vain, never followed his conduct, but it ended well; nor were ever made ashamed of their believing expectations from him. What is good before all the saints, let us therefore abide and abound in, and in this particularly; *Turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually*, *Hos. xii. 6.*

P S A L M LIII.

God speaketh once, yea twice, and it were well if man would even then perceive it; God, in this psalm, speaketh twice, for this is the same almost verbatim with the fourteenth psalm. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins, to set us a blushing, and to set us a trembling because of them; and this is what we are so hardly brought to, that there is need of line upon line to this purpose. The word, as a convincing word, is compared to a hammer, the strokes whereof must be frequently repeated. God, by the psalmist here, (1.) Shows us how bad we are, *ver. 1.* (2.) Proves it upon us by his own certain knowledge, *ver. 2, 3.* (3.) He speaks terror to persecutors, the worst of sinners, *ver. 4, 5.* (4.) He speaks encouragement to God's persecuted people, *ver. 6.* Some little variation there is between *Psal. xiv.* and this, but none considerable, only between *ver. 5, 6.* there, and *ver. 5.* where some expressions there used, are here left out, concerning the shame which the wicked put upon God's people, and instead of that, is here foretold the shame which God would put upon the wicked; which alteration, with some others, he made by divine direction, when he delivered it the second time to the chief musician. In singing it, we ought to lament the corruption of the human nature, and the wretched degeneracy of the world we live in, yet rejoicing, in hope of the great salvation.

¶ To the chief musician upon Mahalath, Maschil,
A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*; corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is none that doeth good.* 2. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. 3. Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy; *there is none that doeth good, no not one.* 4. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people, as they eat bread; they have not called upon God. 5. There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee, thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. 6. O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe, in short, some things concerning sin, in order to the increasing of our sorrow for it, and hatred of it.

1. The fact of sin; is that proved? can the charge be made out? Yes, God is a witness to it, an unexceptionable witness: From the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and sees how little good there is among them, *ver. 2.* All the sinfulness of their hearts and lives is naked and open before him.

2. The fault of sin; is there any harm in it? Yes, it is iniquity, *ver. 1, 4.* it is an unrighteous thing; it is that which there is no good in, *ver. 1, 3.* it is an evil thing, it is the worst of evils, it is that which makes this world such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, *ver. 3.*

3. The

3. The fountain of sin; how comes it that men are so bad? surely, it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes; they say in their hearts, there is no God at all to call us to an account, none that we need to stand in awe of. Mens bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him.

4. The folly of sin; he is a fool (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) that harbours such corrupt thoughts; atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world: They that do not seek God, they do not understand, they are like brute beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes, not so much by the powers of reason, as by a capacity for religion. The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, they have no knowledge; those may truly be said to know nothing, that do not know God, *ver.* 4.

5. The filthiness of sin; sinners are corrupt, *ver.* 1. their nature is vitiated and spoiled, and the more noble the nature is, the more vile it is when it is depraved; as that of the angels, *Corruptio optimi est pessima*. Their iniquity is abominable, it is odious to the holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he hates nothing that he has made. It makes men filthy, altogether filthy; wilful sinners (pardon the expression) even stink above ground in the nostrils of the God of heaven, and the holy angels. What neatness soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain, wickedness is the greatest nastiness in the world.

6. The fruit of sin; see to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last; when mens hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, see their cruelty to their brethren, that are bone of their bone, because they will not run with them to the same excess of riot, they eat them up, as they eat bread; as if they were not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. And see their contempt of God at the same time, they have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.

7. The fear and shame that attends sin, *ver.* 5. There were they in great fear, who had made God their enemy, their own guilty consciences frightened them, and filled them with horror, tho' otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear; the wicked flees when none pursues. See the ground of this fear; it is because God hath formerly scattered the bones of those that encamped against his people, not only broken their power, and dispersed their forces, but slain them, and reduced their bodies to dry bones, like those scattered at the grave's mouth, Psal. cxli. 7. Such will be the fate of those that lay siege to the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, Rev. xx. 9. And the apprehensions of this cannot but put those into frights that eat up God's people. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Sion, to put them to shame, and expose them, because God hath despised them; to laugh at them, because he that sits in heaven laughs at them. We need not look upon those enemies with fear, whom God looks upon with contempt. If he despiseth them, we may.

Lastly, The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil, *ver.* 6. There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption. (1.) God would in due time save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which would bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that had long been in a mournful melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. (2.) He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins, Matt. i. 21.

P S A L M LIV.

The key of this psalm hangs at the door, for the title tells us upon what occasion it was penned, when the inhabitants of Ziph, men of Judah, (types of Judas the traitor) betrayed David to Saul, by informing him where he was, and putting him in a way how to seize him. This they did twice, 1 Sam. xxiii. 19.—xxvi. 1. and it is upon record, to their everlasting infamy. The psalm is sweet; the former part of it, perhaps, was meditated when he was in his distress, and when the danger was over was put into writing, and the two last verses added, which speak his thankfulness for the deliverance; which yet might be written in faith, even then when he was in the midst of his fright. Here (1.) He complains to God of the malice of his enemies, and prays for help against them, *ver.* 1—3. (2.) He comforts himself with an assurance of the divine favour and protection, and that in due time his enemies should be confounded, and he delivered, *ver.* 4—7. What time we are in distress, we may comfortably sing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A psalm of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

1. **S**AVE me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. 2. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. 3. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul; they have not set God before them. Selah.

We may observe here,

1. The great distress that David was now in, which the title gives an account of. The Ziphims came of their own accord, and informed Saul where David was, with a promise to deliver him into his hand. One would have thought, when David was retired into the country, he should not have been pursued; into a desert country, he should not have been discovered; and into his own country, he should not have been betrayed; and yet it seems he was. Never let a good man expect to be safe and easy till he comes to heaven. How treacherous, how officious, were these Ziphims! It is well God is faithful, for men are not to be trusted, *Mich.* vii. 5.

2. His prayer to God for succour and deliverance, *ver.* 1, 2. He appeals to God's strength, by which he was able to help him, and to his name, by which he was engaged to help him, and begs he would save him from his enemies, and judge him, i. e. plead his cause, and judge for him. David has no other plea to depend upon but God's name, no other power to depend upon but God's strength, and those he makes his refuge and confidence. This would be the effectual answer of his prayers, *ver.* 2. which even in his flight, when he had not opportunity for solemn address to God, he was ever and anon lifting up to heaven; *Hear my prayer* which comes from my heart, and give ear to the words of my mouth.

3. His plea, which is taken from the character of his enemies, *ver.* 3. (1.) They are strangers, such were the Ziphites, unworthy the name of Israelites; they have used me more basely and barbarously than the Philistines themselves would have done. The worst treatment may be expected from those who having broken through the bonds of relation and alliance, make themselves strangers. (2.) They are oppressors; such was Saul, who as a king should have used his power for the protection of his good subjects, but abused it for their destruction. Nothing so grievous as oppression in the seat of judgment, Eccl. iii. 16. Paul's greatest perils were by his own countrymen, and by false brethren, 2 Cor. xi. 26. and so were David's. (3.) They were very formidable and threatening; they not only hated him and wished him ill, but they rose up against him in a body, joining their power to do him a mischief. (4.) They were very spiteful and malicious; they seek after my soul; they hunt for the precious life, no less will satisfy them. We may in faith pray that God would not by his providence give success, lest it should look like giving countenance to such cruel bloody men. (5.) They were very profane and atheistical, and for this reason he thought God was concerned in honour to appear against them, *They have not set God before them*, i. e. they have quite cast off the thoughts of God, they do not consider that his eye is upon them, that in fighting against his people they fight against him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement. Note, From those who do not set God before them no good is to be expected; nay, what wickedness will not such men be guilty of? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold those that have broke through the fear of God? Selah. Mark this: Let us all be sure to set God before us at all times; for if we do not, we are in danger of going all to nought.

4. Behold, God is mine helper: the LORD is with them that uphold my soul. 5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies; cut them off in thy truth. 6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee; I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. 7. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

We have here the lively actings of David's faith in his prayer, by which he was assured the issue would be comfortable, tho' the attempt upon him was formidable.

1. He was sure that he had God on his side; that God took his part, *ver.* 4. he speaks it with an air of triumph and exultation, behold, God is mine helper. If we be for him, he is for us; and if he be for us, we shall have such help in him, as that we need not fear any power engaged against us. Tho' men and devils aim to be our destroyers, they shall not prevail while God is our helper. [The Lord is with them that uphold my soul: Compare

Compare *Psal. cxviii. 7. The Lord taketh my part with them that help me.* There are some that uphold me, and God is one of them; he is the principal one; none of them could help me, if he did not help them. Every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be. He means, The Lord is he that doth uphold my soul, and keep me from tiring in my work, and sink under my burthens. He that by his providence upholds all things, by his grace upholds the souls of his people. God, that will in due time save his people, doth in the mean time sustain them, and bear them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

2. God taking part with him, he doubted not but his enemies should both flee and fall before him, *ver. 5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies that observe me,* seeking an opportunity to do me a mischief. The evil they designed against me, the righteous God will return upon their own heads. David would not render evil to them, but he knew God would; *I as a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear.* The enemies we forgive, if they repent not, God will judge; and for this reason we must not avenge ourselves, because God hath said, *Vengeance is mine.* But he prays, *Cut them off in thy truth.* This is not a prayer of malice, but a prayer of truth, for it has an eye to the word of God, and only desires the performance of that. There is truth in God's threatnings, as well as in his promises, and sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost.

3. He promiseth to give thanks to God for all the experiences he had had of his goodness to him, *ver. 6. I will sacrifice unto thee.* Tho' sacrifices were expensive, yet when God required that his worshippers should in that way praise him, David would not only offer them, but offer them freely, and without grudging. All our spiritual sacrifices must in this sense be free-will-offerings, for God loves a cheerful giver. Yet he will not only bring his sacrifice, which was but the shadow, the ceremony, he will mind the substance, *I will praise thy name.* A thankful heart, and the calves of our lips giving thanks to his name, are the sacrifices God will accept. *I will praise thy name for it is good.* Thy name is not only great, but good, and therefore to be praised; to praise thy name is not only what we are bound to, but it is good, it is pleasant, it is profitable; it is good for us, *Psal. xcii. 1. therefore I will praise thy name.*

4. He speaks of his deliverance as a thing done, *ver. 7. I will praise thy name, and say, He hath delivered me.* This shall be my song then. That which he rejoiceth in is a compleat deliverance, *He hath delivered me from all trouble;* and a deliverance to his heart's content; *Mine eye hath seen its desire upon mine enemies:* Not seen them cut off and ruined, but forced to retreat; tidings being brought to Saul that the Philistines were upon him, *1 Sam. xxiii. 27, 28.* That was all David desired, to be himself safe; when he saw Saul draw off his forces he saw his desire. *He hath delivered me from all trouble:* Either (1.) With this thought David comforted himself when he was in distress, *He hath delivered me from all trouble* hitherto, and many a time I have gained my point, and seen my desire on mine enemies, therefore he will deliver me out of this trouble. We should thus in our greatest straits encourage ourselves with our past experiences. Or (2.) With this thought he magnified his present deliverance when the fright is over, that it was an earnest of further deliverance. He speaks of the completing of his deliverance as a thing done, tho' he had as yet many troubles before him; because, having God's promise for it, he was as sure of it as if it was done already. He that hath begun to deliver me from this trouble, shall deliver me from all troubles, and shall at length give me to see my desire upon mine enemies. This may, perhaps, point at Christ, of whom David was a type, God would deliver him out of all the troubles of his state of humiliation, and he was perfectly sure of it; and all things are said to be put under his feet; for tho' we see not yet all things put under him, yet we are sure he shall reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and he shall see his desire upon them. However, it is an encouragement to all believers to make that use of their particular deliverances which St Paul doth (like David here) *2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. He that delivered me from the mouth of the lion, shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.*

P S A L M LV.

It is the conjecture of many expositors, that David penned this psalm upon occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and that the particular enemy he here speaks of, that dealt treacherously with him was Abithophel; and some will therefore make David's troubles here typical of Christ's sufferings, and Abithophel's treachery a figure of Judas's, because they both hanged themselves: But there is nothing in it that is particularly applied to Christ in the New Testament. David was in great distress when he penned this psalm. (1.) He prays, that God would manifest his favour to him, and pleads his own sorrow and fear, *ver. 1—8.* (2.) He prays, that God would manifest his displeasure against his enemies, and pleads their great wickedness and treachery, *ver. 9—15.* and again, *ver. 20, 21.* (3.) He assures himself, that God

would in due time appear for him against his enemies, comforts himself with the hopes of it, and encourageth others to trust in God, *ver. 16—19.* and again, *ver. 22, 23.* In singing this psalm we may, if there be occasion, apply it to our own troubles; if not, we may sympathize with those to whose case it comes nearer, foreseeing that there will be at last indignation and wrath to the persecutors, salvation and joy to the persecuted.

¶ To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A psalm of David.

1. **G**IVE ear to my prayer, O God: and hide not thy self from my supplication. 2. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise. 3. Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. 4. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. 5. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. 6. And I said, O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. 7. Lo then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. 8. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

In these verses we have,

1. David praying. Prayer is a salve for every sore, and a relief to the spirit under every burden. *Give ear to my prayer, O God,* *ver. 12.* He doth not set down the petitions he offered up to God in his distress, but begs that God would hear the prayers which at every turn his heart lifted up to God, and grant an answer of peace to them: *Attend to me, hear me,* Saul would not hear his petitions, his other enemies regarded not his pleas, but Lord, be thou pleased to hearken to me. *Hide not thy self from my supplication;* either as one unconcerned, and not regarding it, nor seeming to take any notice of it; or, as one displeased, angry at me, and therefore at my prayer. If we in our prayers sincerely lay open ourselves, our case, our hearts, to God, we have reason to hope that he will not hide himself, his favours, his comforts, from us.

2. David weeping; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was a man of sorrows, and oft in tears, *ver. 2. I mourn in my complaint,* or, in my meditation, my melancholy musings, and I make a noise; I cannot forbear such sighs and groans, and other expressions of grief, as discover it to those about me. Great griefs are sometimes noisy and clamorous, and by that means are in some measure lessened, while those increase that are stifled, and have no vent given them. But what was the matter? *ver. 3.* It is because of the voice of the enemy, the menaces and insults of Absalom's party, that hectored and talked big, and stirred up the people to cry out against David, and shout him out of his palace and capital city, as afterwards the chief priests stirred up the mob to cry out against the Son of David, *Away with him, crucify him.* Yet it was not the voice of the enemy only that fetched tears from David's eyes, but their oppression, and the hardship he was thereby reduced to. *They cast iniquity upon me.* They could not justly charge David with any male-administration in his government, could not prove any act of oppression or injustice upon him, but they loaded him with calumnies. Tho' they found no iniquity in him relating to his trust as a king, yet they cast all manner of iniquity upon him, and represented him to the people as a tyrant, fit to be expelled. Innocency itself is no security against violent and lying tongues. They hated him themselves, nay, in wrath they hated him; there was in their enmity both the heart and violence of anger, or sudden passion, and the implacableness of hatred and rooted malice; and therefore they studied to make him odious, that others also might hate him. This made him mourn, and the more, because he could remember the time when he was the darling of the people, and answered his name David, a beloved one.

3. David trembling, and in great consternation. We may well suppose him to be so, upon the breaking out of Absalom's conspiracy, and the general defection of the people, even those that he had little reason to suspect.

1. See what fear seized him. David was a man of great boldness, and in some very eminent instances had signalized his courage, and yet when the danger was surprizing and imminent, his heart failed him; let not the stout man therefore glory in his courage, any more than the strong man in strength. Now David's heart is sore pained within him, the terrors of death are fallen upon him, *ver. 4.* Now fearfulness of mind, and trembling of body, are come upon him, and horror has covered and overwhelmed him, *ver. 5.* when without are fightings, no marvel that within are fears; and if it was upon the occasion of Absalom's rebellion, we may suppose that the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah, which God was now reckoning with him for, added as much more to the fright. Sometimes David's faith

made him in a manner fearless, and he could boldly say when surrounded with enemies, *I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.* But at other times his fears prevail and tyrannize; for the best men are not always alike strong in faith.

2. See how desirous he was in this fright to retire into a desert, any whither to be far enough from hearing the voice of the enemy, and seeing their oppressions. He said, *ver. 6.* said it to God in prayer, said it to himself in meditation, said it to his friends in complaint, *O that I had wings like a dove!* As much as he had been sometimes in love with Jerusalem, now it was become a rebellious city, he longed to get clear of it, and like the prophet wisheth he had *in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, that he might leave his people and go from them, for they are an assembly of treacherous men,* Jer. ix. 2. This agrees very well with David's resolution upon the breaking out of that plot, *Arise, let us flee, and make speed to depart,* 2 Sam. xv. 14. Observe,

(1.) How he would make his escape, he was so surrounded with enemies, that he saw not how he could escape but upon the wing, and therefore wisheth, *O that I had wings,* not like a hawk that flies strongly, but *like a dove* that flies swiftly; he wishes not for wings to fly upon the prey, but to fly from the birds of prey, for such his enemies were. The wings of a dove were most agreeable to him who was of a dove-like spirit, and therefore the wings of an eagle would not become him. The dove flies low, and takes shelter as soon as she can, and thus would David fly.

(2.) What he would make his escape from, from the wind, storm, and tempest, the tumult and ferment that the city was now in, and the danger to which he was exposed. Herein he was like a dove that cannot endure noise.

(3.) What he aimed at in making this escape, not victory but rest. *I would fly away, and be at rest,* ver. 6. *I would fly any whither, if it were to a barren frightful wilderness, never so far off so I might be quiet,* ver. 7. Note, Peace and quietness in silence and solitude is what the wisest and best of men have most earnestly coveted, and the more when they have been vexed and wearied with the noisiness and clamour of those about them. Gracious souls wish to retire from the hurry and bustle of this world, where they may sweetly enjoy God and themselves, and if there be any true peace on this side heaven, it is they that enjoy it in those retirements. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world to perfect and everlasting rest.

9. Destroy, O LORD, and divide their tongues; for I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof; mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. 11. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile departs not from her streets. 12. For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have born it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him. 13. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. 14. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. 15. Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

David here complains of his enemies, whose wicked plots had brought him, tho' not to his faith's end, yet to his wit's end, and prays against them by the spirit of prophecy. Observe here,

1. The character he gives of the enemies he feared. They were of the worst sort of men, and his description of them agrees very well with Absalom and his accomplices;

(1.) He complains of the city Jerusalem, which strangely fell in with Absalom, and fell off from David, so that he had none there but his own guards and servants, that he could repose any confidence in; *How is that faithful city become a harlot!* David did not take the representation of it from others; but with his own eyes, and with a sad heart did himself see nothing but *violence and strife in the city,* ver. 9. for when they grew disaffected and disloyal to David, they grew mischievous one to another. If he walked the rounds upon the walls of the city, he saw that violence and strife went about it day and night, and mounted its guards, ver. 10. All the arts and methods which the rebels used for the fortifying of the city were made up of violence and strife, and there were no remains of honesty or love among them. If he looked into the heart of the city, mischief and injury, mutual wrong and vexation were in the midst of it; wickedness, all manner of wickedness, is in the midst thereof; *Jusque datum sceleris:* Deceit and guile, and all manner of treacherous dealing departed not from her streets, ver. 11. It may be meant of the base and barbarous usage they gave to David's friends, and such as they knew were firm and faithful to him; they did them all the mis-

chief they could by fraud or force. Is this the character of Jerusalem, the royal city, and, which is more, the holy city; and in David's time too, so soon after the thrones of judgment and the testimony of Israel were both placed there? *Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty?* Lam. ii. 15. Is Jerusalem, the head quarters of God's priests, so ill taught? Can Jerusalem be ungrateful to David himself, its own illustrious founder, and be made too hot for him? Let us not think strange at the corruptions and disorders of this church on earth, but long to see the New Jerusalem, where there is no violence or strife, no mischief or guile, and into which no unclean thing shall enter, nor any thing that disquiets.

(2.) He complains of one of the ring-leaders of the conspiracy, that had been very industrious to foment jealousies, to misrepresent him and his government, and to incense the city against him; it was one that reproached him, as if he either abused his power, or neglected the use of it, for that was Absalom's malicious suggestion; *There is no man deputed of the king to bear thee,* 2 Sam. xv. 3. That, and other the like accusations were industriously spread among the people; and who was most active in it? not a sworn enemy, not Shimei, or any of the nonjurors; then I could have born it, for I should not have expected better from them, (and we find how patiently he did bear Shimei's curses) not one that professed to hate me, then I would have stood upon my guard against him, would have hid myself and my counsels from him, so that it would not have been in his power to betray me; *but it was thou, a man, mine equal,* ver. 13. The Chaldee paraphrase names Ahithophel as the person here meant, and nothing in that plot seems to have discouraged David so much as to hear that Ahithophel was *among the conspirators with Absalom,* 2 Sam. xv. 31. for he was *the king's counsellor,* 1 Chron. xxvii. 33. *It was thou, a man, mine equal,* one whom I esteemed as myself, a friend as mine own soul, whom I had laid in my bosom, and made hail fellow with myself; to whom I had communicated all my secrets, and who knew my mind as well as I myself did; my guide with whom I advised, and by whom I was directed in all my affairs, whom I made president of the council, and prime minister of state; my intimate acquaintance, and familiar friend; this is the man that now abuseth me; I have been kind to him; but I find him thus basely ungrateful; I have put a trust in him, but I find him thus basely treacherous; nay, and he could not have done me the one half of the mischief he doth, if I had not shewed him so much respect. All this must need be very grievous to an ingenuous mind, and yet this was not all; this traitor had seemed a saint, else he had never been David's bosom-friend, ver. 14. *We took counsel together,* spent many an hour together with a great deal of pleasure in religious discourse, or, as Dr Hammond reads it, *we joined ourselves together to the assembly;* I gave him the right-hand of fellowship in holy ordinances, and then *we walked to the house of God in company,* to attend the publick service. Note, 1. There always has been, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad, sound and unsound, in the visible church, between whom perhaps for a long time we can discern no difference; but the Searcher of hearts doth. David, who went to the house of God in his sincerity, had Ahithophel in company with him, who went in his hypocrisy. The Pharisee and the Publican went together to the temple to pray; but sooner or later they that are perfect, and they that are not, will be made manifest. (2.) Carnal policy may carry men on very far, and very long in a profession of religion, while it is in fashion, and will serve a turn. In the court of pious David, none more devout than Ahithophel, and yet his heart not right in the sight of God. (3.) We must not wonder, if we be sadly deceived in some that have made great pretensions to those two sacred things, religion and friendship; David himself, tho' a very wise man, was thus imposed upon, which may make our like disappointments the more tolerable.

2. His prayers against them, which we are both to stand in awe of, and to comfort ourselves in as prophecies, but not to copy into our prayers against any particular enemies of our own. He prays,

1. That God would disperse them as he did the Babel-builders, ver. 9. *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues,* i. e. Blast their counsels, by making them to disagree among themselves, and clash with one another: Send an evil spirit among them, that they may not understand one another, but be envious and jealous one of another. This prayer was answered in the turning of Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, by setting up the counsel of Hushai against it. God often destroys the church's enemies by dividing them; nor is there a surer way to the destruction of any people than their division. A kingdom, an interest divided against itself cannot long stand.

2. That God would destroy them, as he did Dathan and Abiram, and their associates, who were confederate against Moses, whose throat being an open sepulchre, the earth therefore opened, and swallowed them up. This was then a new thing which God executed, Numb. xvi. 30. But David prays that it might now be repeated, or something equivalent, ver. 15. *Let death seize upon them* by divine warrant, and let them go down quick into hell; let them be dead and buried, and damned in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are, it is in the midst of them. The

The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell, for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall therefore live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah.

16. As for me, I will call upon God: and the LORD shall save me. 17. Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. 18. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me: for there were many with me. 19. God shall hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old, Selah: because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. 20. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. 21. *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords. 22. Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. 23. But thou, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in thee.

In these verses,

1. David perseveres in his resolution to call upon God, being well assured that he should not seek him in vain, *ver. 16.* As for me, let them take what course they please to secure themselves, let violence and strife be their guards, prayer shall be mine: This I have found comfort in, and therefore this will I abide by. *I will call upon God*, and commit myself to him, and *the Lord shall save me*, for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, in a right manner, shall be saved, *Rom. x. 13.* He resolves to be both fervent and frequent in this duty. (1.) He will pray fervently. *I will pray and cry aloud.* I will meditate, so the former word signifies, I will speak with my own heart, and the prayer shall come from thence; then we pray aright when we pray with all that is within us; think first, and then pray over our thoughts; for the true nature of prayer is lifting up the heart to God: And having meditated, he will cry, he will cry aloud; the fervour of his spirit in prayer shall be expressed, and yet more excited by the intenseness and earnestness of his voice. (2.) He will pray frequently, every day, and three times a day, evening and morning, and at noon. It is probable this had been his constant practice, and he resolves to continue it, now he is in his distress: And then we may come the more boldly to the throne of grace in trouble, when we do not then first begin to scrape acquaintance with God, (as I may say) but it is what we have constantly practised, and the trouble finds the wheels of prayer a-going. They that think three meals a day little enough for the body, ought much more to think three solemn prayers a day little enough for the soul, and to count it a pleasure, not a task: As it is fit in the morning we should begin the day with God, and in the evening close it with him, so it is fit in the midst of the day we should retire a while to converse with him. It was Daniel's practice to pray three times a day, *Dan. vi. 10.* And noon was one of Peter's hours of prayer, *Acts x. 9.* Let not us be weary of praying often, for God is not weary of hearing; he shall hear my voice, and not blame me for coming too often, but the oftner the better, the more welcome.

2. He assures himself, that God would in due time give an answer of peace to his prayers.

(1.) That he himself should be delivered, and his fears prevented; those fears with which he was much disordered, *ver. 4,* 5. by the exercise of faith were now silenced, and he begins to rejoice in hope, *ver. 18.* *God has delivered my soul in peace, i. e.* he will deliver it, and David is as sure of the deliverance as if it were already wrought. His enemies were at war with him, and the battle was against him, but God delivered him in peace, *i. e.* brought him off with as much comfort as if he had never been in danger. If he did not deliver him in victory, yet he delivered him in peace, inward peace, he delivered his soul in peace; by patience and holy joy in God he kept possession of that; those are safe and easy, whose hearts and minds are kept by that peace of God which *passeth all understanding*, *Phil. iv. 7.* David in his fright thought all were against him, but now he sees there were many with him, more than he imagined, his interest proved better than he expected, and this he gives to God the glory of; for it is he that raiseth us up friends when we need them, and makes them faithful to us: There were many with him, for tho' his subjects deserted him, and went over to Absalom, yet God was with him, and the good angels: With an eye of faith he now sees himself surrounded as Elitha was, with chariots of fire; and horses of fire, and therefore triumphs thus, *there are many with me, more with me than against me*, *2 Kings vi. 16, 17.*

(2.) That his enemies should be reckoned with, and brought down. They had frightened him with their menaces, *ver. 3.* but here he faith enough to frighten them, and make them tremble with more reason, and no remedy for they could not ease themselves of their fears as David could, by faith in God. (1.) David here gives their character, as the reason why he expected God would bring them down.

(1.) They are impious and profane, and stand in no awe of God, of his authority or wrath, *ver. 19.* *Because they have no changes*, no afflictions, no interruption to the constant course of their prosperity, no crosses to empty them from vessel to vessel, *therefore they fear not God*, they live in a constant neglect and contempt of God and religion, which is the cause of all their other wickedness; and by which they are certainly marked for destruction.

(2.) They are treacherous and false, and will not be held by the most sacred and solemn engagements, *ver. 20.* *He hath put forth his hand against such as be at peace with him*, that never provoked him, nor gave him any cause to quarrel with them; nay to whom he had given all possible encouragement to expect kindness from him. He has put forth his hand against those whom he had given his hand to, and has broken his covenant, both with God and man, has perfidiously violated his engagements to both, than which nothing makes men riper for ruin.

(3.) They are base and hypocritical, pretending friendship while they design mischief, *ver. 21.* *The words of his mouth* (probably, he means Ahithophel particularly) *were smoother than butter, and softer than oil*, so courteous was he, and obliging, so free in his professions of respect and kindness, and the proffers of his service, and yet at the same time war was in his heart, and all this courtesy was but a stratagem of war, and those very words had such a mischievous design in them, that they were as drawn swords designed to stab. They smile in a man's face, and cut his throat at the same time, as Joab that kissed and killed. Satan is such an enemy that flatters men into their ruin; *when he speaks fair, believe him not.*

(2.) David here foretels their ruin.

(1.) God shall afflict them and bring them into straits and frights, and recompense tribulation to them that have troubled his people, and this in answer to the prayers of his people, *God shall hear and afflict them*, hear the cries of the oppressed, and speak terror to their oppressors, even he that abideth of old, who is God from everlasting and world without end; and who sits Judge from the beginning of time, and hath always presided in the affairs of the children of men. Mortal men, tho' never so high and strong, will easily be crushed by an eternal God, and are a very unequal match for him. This the saints have comforted themselves with in reference to the threatening power of the church's enemies. *Hab. i. 12.* *Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord?*

(2.) God shall bring them down, not only to the dust, but to the pit of destruction, *ver. 23.* To the bottomless pit, which is called destruction, *Job xxvi. 6.* He afflicted them, *ver. 19.* to see if that would humble and reform them; but they not being wrought upon by that, he shall at last bring them to ruin. Those that are not reclaimed by the rod of affliction, will certainly be brought down into the pit of destruction. They are bloody and deceitful men, that is, the worst of men, and therefore shall not live out half their days, *i. e.* not half so long as men ordinarily live, and as they might have lived in a course of nature, and as they themselves expected to live. They shall live as long as the Lord of life, the righteous Judge, has appointed, with whom the number of our months is, but he has determined to cut them off by an untimely death in the midst of their days. They were bloody men, and cut others off; and therefore God will justly cut them off: they were deceitful men, and defrauded others of the one half perhaps, of what was their due, and now God will cut them short, tho' not of that which was their due, yet of that which they counted upon.

3. He encourageth himself and all good people to commit themselves to God, with confidence in him. He himself resolves to do so, *ver. 23.* *I will trust in thee*, in thy providence, and power, and mercy, and not in my own prudence, strength, or merit; when bloody and deceitful men are cut off in the midst of their days, I shall still live by faith in thee. And this he will have others to do, *ver. 22.* *Cast thy burthen upon the Lord*, whoever thou art that art burthened, and whatever the burthen is. *Cast thy gift upon the Lord*, so some read it; whatever blessings God has bestowed upon thee to enjoy, commit them all to his custody, and particularly commit the keeping of thy soul to him. Or, whatever it is that thou desirest God should give thee, leave it to him to give it thee in his own way and time. *Cast thy care upon the Lord*, so the LXX, to which the apostle refers. *1 Pet. v. 7.* Care is a burthen, it makes the heart stoop, *Prov. xii. 25.* we must cast it upon God by faith and prayer, commit our way and works to him, let him do as seemeth him good and we will be satisfied. To cast our burthen upon God, is to stay ourselves on his providence and promise, and to be very easy in the assurance, that all shall work for good. If we do so, it is promised, (1.) That he will sustain us, both support and supply us; will himself carry us in the arms of his power, as the nurse carries the sucking child, will strengthen our spirits

so by his Spirit, as that they shall sustain the infirmity. He has not promised presently to free us from that trouble which gives rise to our cares and fears; but he will provide that we be not tempted above what we are able, and that we shall be able according as we are tempted. (2.) That he will never suffer the righteous to be moved, to be so shaken by any troubles, as to quit either their duty to God, or their comfort in him. However, he will not suffer them to be moved for ever; (as some read it) tho' they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down.

P S A L M LVI.

It seems by this, and many other psalms, that even in times of the greatest trouble and distress, David never hung his harp upon the willow-trees, never unstrung it, or laid it by; but when his dangers and fears were greatest, yet still he was in tune for singing God's praises. He was in imminent peril when he penned this psalm, at least when he meditated it; yet even then his meditation of God was sweet. (1.) He complains of the malice of his enemies, and begs mercy for himself and justice against them, ver. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7. (2.) He confides in God, being assured that he took his part, comforting himself with this, that therefore he was safe, and should be victorious, and that while he lived he should praise God, ver. 3, 4, 8—13. How pleasantly may a good Christian in singing this psalm rejoice in God, and praise him for what he will do, as well as for what he hath done.

¶ To the chief musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

1. **B**E merciful unto me, O God, for man would swallow me up: he fighting daily oppresseth me. 2. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. 3. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. 4. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. 5. Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. 6. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps when they wait for my soul. 7. Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.

David in this psalm by his faith throws himself into the hands of God, then when he had by his fear and folly thrown himself into the hands of the Philistines; it was when they took him in Gath; whither he fled for fear of Saul, forgetting the quarrel they had with him for killing Goliath; but they soon put him in mind of it, 1 Sam. xxi. 10, 11. Upon that occasion he changed his behaviour, but with so little ruffle to his temper, that then he penned both this psalm and the 34th. This is called *Michtam*, a golden psalm. So some other psalms are entitled, but this has something peculiar in the title; it is upon *Jonath-elem-rechokim*, which signifies *the silent dove afar off*; some apply that to David himself, who wished for the wings of a dove, on which to fly away. He was innocent and inoffensive, mild and patient as a dove, was at this time driven from his nest, from the sanctuary, Psal. lxxxiv. 3. was forced to wander afar off, to seek for shelter in distant countries, there he was like the doves of the vallies, mourning and melancholy; but silent, neither murmuring against God, nor railing at the instruments of his trouble; herein a type of Christ, who was as a sheep, dumb before the shearers, and a pattern to Christians, who wherever they are, and whatever injuries are done them, ought to be as silent doves.

In this former part of the psalm,

1. He complains to God of the malice and wickedness of his enemies, to shew what reason he had to fear them, and what cause, what need, there was that God should appear against them, ver. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* That petition includes all the good we come to the throne of grace for; if we obtain mercy there, we obtain all we can desire; and need no more to make us happy. It implies likewise our best plea, not our merit, but God's mercy, his free, rich mercy. He prays he might find mercy with God, for with men he could find no mercy. When he fled from the cruel hands of Saul, he fell into the cruel hands of the Philistines. Lord, (saith he) be thou merciful to me now, or I am undone. The mercy of God is what we may flee to, and trust to, and in faith pray for when we are surrounded on all sides with difficulties and dangers. He complains,

1. That his enemies were very numerous, ver. 2. *They be many that fight against me*, and think to over-power me with numbers; take notice of this, *O thou most High*, and make it to appear that wherein they deal proudly thou art above them.

It is a point of honour to come into the help of one against many. And if God be on our side, how many foevers they are that fight against us, we may upon good grounds boast, that there are more with us; for (as that great general said) how many do we reckon him for?

2. That they were very barbarous; they would swallow him up, ver. 1. and again, ver. 2. They fought to devour him; no less would serve, they came upon him with the utmost fury, like beasts of prey to eat up his flesh, Psal. xxvii. 2. Man would swallow him up, those of his own kind, from whom he might have expected humanity. The ravenous beasts prey not upon those of their own species; yet a bad man would devour a good man if he could. They are men weak and frail, make them to know that they are so, Psal. ix. ult.

3. That they were very unanimous, ver. 6. They gathered themselves together; though they were many and of different interests among themselves, yet they united and combined against David, as Herod and Pilate against the Son of David.

4. That they were very powerful; quite too hard for him if God did not help him. They fight against me, ver. 2. They oppress me, ver. 1. I am almost overcome and born down by them, and reduced to the last extremity.

5. That they were very subtle and crafty, ver. 6. They hide themselves, industriously cover their designs, that they may the more effectually prosecute and pursue them. They hide themselves as a lion in his den, that they may mark my steps, i. e. they observe every thing I say and do with a critical eye, that they may have something to accuse me of. Thus Christ's enemies watched him, Luke xx. 20. Or, they have an eye upon all my motions, that they may gain an opportunity to do me a mischief, and may lay their snares for me.

6. That they were very spiteful and malicious; they put invidious constructions upon every thing he said, tho' never so honestly meant, and prudently expressed, ver. 5. they wrest my words, put them upon the rack to extort that out of them which was never in them, and so they made him an offender for a word, (Isa. xxix. 21.) misrepresenting it to Saul, and aggravating it, to incense him yet more against him. They made it their whole business to ruin David, all their thoughts were against him for evil, which put evil interpretations upon all his words.

7. That they were very restless and unwearied; they continually waited for his soul, it was the life, the precious life they hunted for, it was his death they longed for, ver. 6. They fought daily against him, ver. 1. and would daily swallow him up, ver. 2. and every day they wrested his words, ver. 5. Their malice would not admit the least cessation of arms or the acts of hostility, but they were continually pushing at him. Such as this is the enmity of Satan and his agents against the kingdom of Christ, and the interests of his holy religion, which if we cordially espouse, we must not think it strange to meet with such treatment as this, as tho' some strange thing happened to us. Our betters have been thus used; so persecuted they the prophets.

2. He encourageth himself in God, and in his promises, power, and providence, ver. 3, 4. In the midst of his complaints, and before he has said what he has to say of his enemies, he triumphs in the divine protection. (1.) He resolves to make God his confidence, then when dangers were most threatening, and all other confidences failed; what time I am afraid, in the day of my fear, when I am most terrified from without, and most timorous within, then I will trust in thee, and thereby my fears shall be silenced. Note, There are some times which are in a special manner times of fear with God's people; and in these times, it is their duty and interest to trust in God, as their God, and to know whom they have trusted. This will fix the heart and keep it in peace. (2.) He resolves to make God's promises the matter of his praises, and so we have reason to make them, ver. 4. *In God I will praise* not only his work which he has done, but his word which he has spoken; I will give him thanks for a promise, tho' not yet performed: in God, i. e. In his strength, and by his assistance, I will both glory in his word, and give him the glory of it. His word, i. e. His providences, (so some) every event that he orders and appoints concerning me; when I speak well of God, with him I will speak well of every thing that he doth. (3.) Thus supported, he will bid defiance to all adverse powers; *when in God I have put my trust*, I am safe, I am easy, and *I will not fear what flesh can do unto me*; it is but flesh and cannot do much; nay, it can do nothing but by divine permission. As we must not trust to an arm of flesh when it is engaged for us, so we must not be afraid of an arm of flesh when it is stretched out against us.

3. He foresees and foretels the fall of those that fought against him, and of all others that think to establish themselves in and by any wicked practices, ver. 7. *shall they escape by iniquity?* They hope to escape God's judgments as they escape mens, by violence and fraud, and the arts of injustice and treachery; but shall they escape? No, certainly, they shall not; the sin of sinners will never be their security; nor will either their impudence or their hypocrisy bring them off at God's bar; God will in his anger cast down, and cast out, such people, Rom. ii. 3. None are raised so high, or settled so firm, but that the justice of God can bring them down, both from their dignities, and from their

their confidences; *Who knows the power of God's anger?* How high it can reach, and how home it can strike?

8. Thou tellest my wanderings, put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they not in thy book?* 9. When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know, for God is for me. 10. In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. 11. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. 12. Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. 13. For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*

Several things David here comforts himself with, in the day of his distress and fear.

1. That God took particular notice of all his grievances, and all his griefs, *ver. 8.* (1.) Of all the inconveniencies of his state; *thou tellest my wanderings*, my flittings, so the old Translation. David was now but a young man (under thirty) and yet he had had many removes, from his father's house to the court, thence to the camp, and now driven out to sojourn where he could find a place, but not allowed to rest any where; hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; continual terrors and toils attended him; but this comforted him, that God kept a particular account of all his motions, and numbred all the weary steps he took by night or by day. Note, God takes cognizance of all the afflictions of his people, and those whom men have cast out from their converse, he has not cast out from his care and love. (2.) Of all the impressions those made upon his spirit. When he was wandering, he was often weeping; and therefore prays, *put thou my tears into thy bottle*, to be preserved and looked upon; nay, I know they are in thy book, the book of thy remembrance; God has a bottle and a book for his peoples tears, both those for their sins and those for their afflictions. This intimates, (1.) That he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. As the blood of his saints, and their deaths, are precious in the sight of the Lord, so are their tears, not one of them shall fall to the ground. *I have seen thy tears*, 2 Kin. xx. 5. *I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself*, Jer. xxxi. 18. (2.) That he will remember them, and review them, as we do the accounts we have booked. Paul was mindful of Timothy's tears; 2 Tim. i. 4. and God will not forget the sorrows of his people. The tears of God's persecuted people are bottled up, and sealed among God's treasures; and when these books come to be opened, they will be found vials of wrath which will be poured out upon their persecutors, whom God will surely reckon with for all the tears they have forced from his peoples eyes; and they will be breasts of consolation to God's mourners, whose sackcloth will be turned into garments of praise; God will comfort his people according to the time wherein he has afflicted them, and give to them to reap in joy, who sowed in tears. What was sown a tear will come up a pearl.

2. That his prayers would be powerful for the defeat and discomfiture of his enemies, as well as for his own support and encouragement, *ver. 9.* *When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back*; I need no other weapons but prayers and tears, *this I know, for God is for me*, to plead my cause, to protect and deliver me, and if God be for me, who can be against me so as to prevail. The saints have God for them; they may know it; and to him they must cry when they are surrounded with enemies; which if they do in faith, they shall find a divine power exerted and engaged for them; their enemies shall be made to turn back; their spiritual enemies, against whom we fight best upon our knees, *Eph. vi. 18.*

3. That his faith in God would set him above the fear of man, *ver. 10, 11.* Here he repeats with a strong pathos what he had said, *ver. 4.* *In God will I praise his word*, i. e. I will firmly depend upon the promise for the sake of him that made it, who is true and faithful, and has wisdom, power, and goodness enough to make it good. When we give credit to a man's bill, we honour him that drew it; so when we do and suffer for God in a dependence upon his promise, not staggering at it, we give glory to God, we praise his word, and so give praise to him. Having thus put his trust in God, he looks with a holy contempt upon the threatening power of man. *In God have I put my trust*, and in him only, and therefore *I will not be afraid what man can do unto me*, tho' I know very well what he would do if he could, *ver. 1, 2.* This triumphant word so expressive of a holy magnanimity, the apostle puts into the mouth of every true No. xlii.

believer, whom he makes a Christian hero, *Heb. xiii. 6.* We may each of us boldly say, *the Lord is my helper*, and then *I will not fear what man shall do unto me*; for he has no power but what he has given him from above.

4. That he was in bonds to God, *ver. 12.* *Thy vows are upon me, O God*: Not upon me as a burthen which I am loaded with, but as a badge, which I glory in, as that by which I am known to be thy menial servant; not upon me as fetters that hamper me, (such are superstitious vows) but upon me as a bridle that restrains me from what would be hurtful to me, and directs me in the way of my duty. Thy vows, i. e. the vows I have made to thee, to which thou art not only a witness but a party, and which thou hast commanded and encouraged me to make. It is probable, he means especially those vows, which he had made to God in the day of his trouble and distress, which he would retain the remembrance of, and acknowledge the obligations of when his fright was over. Note, It ought to be the matter of our consideration and joy, that *the vows of God are upon us*; our baptismal vows renewed at the Lord's table, our occasional vows under convictions, under corrections, by these we are bound to live to God.

5. That he should still have more and more occasion to praise him; *I will render praises unto thee*. This is part of the performance of his vows; for vows of thankfulness properly accompany prayers for mercy; and when the mercy is received must be made good. When we study what we shall render, this is the least we can resolve upon to render praises to God. Poor returns for rich receivings. Two things he will praise God for.

1. For what he had done for him, *ver. 13.* *Thou hast delivered my soul*, my life, from death, which was just ready to seize me. If God have delivered us from sin, either from the commission of it by preventing grace, or from the punishment of it by pardoning mercy; we have reason to own that he has thereby delivered our souls from death, which is the wages of sin: If we, who were by nature dead in sin, are quickened together with Christ, and are made spiritually alive, we have reason to own that God has delivered our souls from death.

2. For what he would do for him; *Thou hast delivered my soul from death*, and so hast given me a new life, and thereby hast given me an earnest of further mercy, that thou wilt deliver my feet from falling: Thou hast done the greater, and therefore thou wilt do the lesser; thou hast begun a good work, and therefore thou wilt carry it on, and perfect it. This may be taken either as the matter of his prayer, pleading his experience; or, as the matter of his praise raising his expectations: and those that know how to praise in faith, will give God thanks for mercies in promise and prospect, as well as in possession. See here, (1.) What David hopes for, that God would deliver his feet from falling either into sin which would wound his conscience, or into the appearance of sin, from which his enemies would take occasion to wound his good name. Those that think they stand, must take heed lest they fall, because the best stand no longer than God is pleased to uphold them. We are weak, our way is slippery, many stumbling-blocks are in it, our spiritual enemies are industrious to thrust us down, and therefore we are concerned by faith and prayer to commit ourselves to his care, who *keepeth the feet of his saints*. (2.) What he builds this hope upon; *Thou hast delivered my soul from death*, and therein hast magnified thy power and goodness, and put me into a capacity of receiving further mercy from thee; and now wilt thou not secure and crown thy own work? God never brought his people out of Egypt to slay them in the wilderness. He that in conversion delivers the soul from so great a death as sin is, will not fail to preserve it to his heavenly kingdom. (3.) What he designs in these hopes; *that I may walk before God in the light of the living*, i. e. (1.) That I may get to heaven, the only land of light and life; for in this world darkness and death reigns. (2.) That I may do my duty while this life lasts. Note, This we should aim at in all our desires and expectation of deliverance both from sin and trouble, that we may do God so much the better service; *that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we may serve him without fear*.



P S A L M LVII.

This psalm is very like that which goes next before it, it was penned upon a like occasion, when David was both in danger of trouble, and in temptation to sin; it begins as that did, Be merciful to me; the method also is the same; (1.) He begins with prayer and complaint; yet not without some assurance of speeding in his request, ver. 1—6. (2.) He concludes with joy and praise, ver. 7—11. So that from hence we may take direction and encouragement both in our supplications, and in our thanksgivings, and may offer both to God in singing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

1. **B**E merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. 2. I will cry unto God most high: unto God that performeth all things for me. 3. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up; Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. 4. My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. 5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth. 6. They have prepared a net for my steps, my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.

The title of this psalm has one word new in it, *Al-taschith*; *Destroy not*: Some make it to be only some known tune to which this psalm was set; others apply it to the occasion and matter of the psalm; *destroy not*, i. e. David would not let Saul be destroyed, when now in the cave there was a fair opportunity of doing it, and his servants would fain have done it; no, faith David, *destroy him not*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4, 6. Or rather, God would not let David be destroyed by Saul; he suffered him to persecute David, but still under this limitation, *destroy him not*; as he permitted Satan to afflict Job, *only save his life*. David must not be destroyed, for *a blessing is in him*, Isa. lxv. 8. even Christ, the best of blessings. When David was in the cave in imminent peril, he here tells us what were the workings of his heart towards God; and happy they that have such good thoughts as these in their minds when they are in danger.

1. He supports himself with faith and hope in God, and prayer to him, ver. 1, 2. Seeing himself surrounded with enemies, he looks up to God with that suitable prayer, *Be merciful to me, O Lord*; which he again repeats, and it is no vain repetition. *Be merciful unto me*. It was the publican's prayer, Luke xviii. 13. It is pity any should use it slightly and profanely, should cry, *God be merciful to us*, or, *Lord have mercy upon us*, when they mean only to express their wonder or surprize, or vexation; but God and his mercy are not in all their thoughts. It is with much devout affection that David here prays, *Be merciful unto me, O Lord*; look with compassion upon me, and in thy love and pity redeem me. To recommend himself to God's mercy, he here professeth,

1. That all his dependence is upon God. *My soul trusteth in thee*, ver. 1. He did not only profess trust in God, but his soul did indeed rely on God only, with a sincere devotion, and self-dedication, and an entire complacency and satisfaction. He goes to God, and at the footstool of the throne of his grace humbly professeth his confidence in him, *in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge*, as the chickens take shelter under the wings of the hen, when the birds of prey are ready to strike at them, until these calamities be overpast. (1.) He was confident his troubles would end well in due time; *these calamities will be overpast*; the storm will blow over, *non fit male nunc & olim sic erit*. Our Lord Jesus comforted himself with this in his sufferings, Luke xxii. 37. *The things concerning me have an end*. (2.) He was very easy under the divine protection in the mean time. (1.) He comforted himself in the goodness of God's nature, by which he is inclined to succour and protect his people, as the hen is by instinct to shelter her young ones: God comes upon the wing to the help of his people, which notes a speedy deliverance, Psal. xviii. 10. and he takes them under his wing, which notes warmth and refreshment, even when the calamities are upon them, see Matt. xxiii. 37. (2.) In the promise of his word, and the covenant of his grace; for it may refer to the out-stretched wings of the cheru-

bims, between which God is said to dwell, Psal. lxxx. 1. and from whence he gave his oracles. To God, as the God of grace, will I fly, and his promise shall be my refuge, and a sure passport it will be through all these dangers. God, by his promise, offers himself to us to be trusted, we by our faith must accept of him, and put our trust in him.

2. That all his desire is towards God, ver. 2. *I will cry unto God most high*, for succour and relief; to him that is most high will I lift up my soul, and pray earnestly, even unto God that performeth all things for me. Note, (1.) In every thing that befalls us we ought to see and own the hand of God; whatever is done is of his performing, in it his counsel is accomplished, and the scripture is fulfilled. (2.) Whatever God performs concerning his people, it will appear in the issue to have been performed for them, and for their benefit: Tho' God be high, most high, yet he condescends so low, as to take care that all things be made to work for good to them. (3.) This is a good reason why we should in all our straits and difficulties cry unto him; not only pray but pray earnestly.

3. That all his expectation is from God, ver. 3. *He shall send from heaven and save me*. They that make God their only refuge, and fly to him by faith and prayer, may be sure of salvation in his way and time. Observe here, (1.) Whence he expects the salvation; from heaven. Look which way he will on this earth, and refuge fails, no help appears, but he looks for it from heaven; they that lift up their hearts to things above, may from thence expect all good. (2.) What the salvation is that he expects; he trusts God will save him from the reproach of those that would swallow him up, that aimed to ruin him, and in the mean time did all they could to vex him. Some read it, *He shall send from heaven and save me, for he hath put to shame him that would swallow me up*; he hath disappointed their designs against me hitherto, and therefore he will perfect my deliverance. (3.) What he will ascribe his salvation to; *God shall send forth his mercy and truth*. God is good in himself, and faithful to every word that he hath spoken, and so he makes it appear when he works deliverance for his people: We need no more to make us happy, but to have the benefit of the mercy and truth of God, Psal. xxv. 10.

2. He represents the power and malice of his enemies, ver. 4. *My soul is among lions*, so fierce and furious was Saul, and those about him, against David, he might have been as safe in a den of lions, as among such men that were continually roaring against him, and ready to make a prey of him. They are set on fire, and breathe nothing but flame; they set on fire the course of nature, inflaming one another against David, and they were themselves set on fire of hell, Jam. iii. 6. They were sons of men, from whom one might have expected something of the reason and compassion of a man; but they were beasts of prey in the shape of men, their teeth which they gnashed upon him, and with which they hoped to tear him to pieces, and to eat him up, were spears and arrows fitted for mischiefs and murders; and their tongue, with which they cursed him, and wounded his reputation, was as a sharp sword to cut and kill, see Psal. xlii. 10. A spiteful tongue is a dangerous weapon, wherewith Satan's instruments fight against God's people. He describes their malicious projects against him, ver. 6. and shews the issue of them; *they have prepared a net for my steps* in which to take me, that I might not again escape out of their hands; *They have digged a pit before me*, that I might ere I was aware run headlong into it; see the policies of the church's enemies, see the pains they take to do mischief. But let us see what comes of it. (1.) It is indeed some disturbance to David, *my soul is bowed down*. It made him droop, and hang the head, to think that there should be those that bore him so much ill-will. But, (2.) It was destruction to themselves; they digged a pit for David, *into the midst whereof they are fallen*: The mischief they designed against David returned upon themselves, and they were themselves embarrassed in their counsels; then when Saul was pursuing David, the Philistines were invading him; nay, in the cave, when Saul thought David should fall into his hands, he fell into the hands of David, and lay at his mercy.

3. He prays to God to glorify himself and his own great name, ver. 5. whatever comes of me and my interest, *be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens*, be thou praised by the holy angels, those glorious inhabitants of the upper world; and let thy glory be above, or over, all the earth, let all the inhabitants of this earth be brought to know and praise thee. Thus God's glory should lie nearer our hearts, and we should be more concerned for that than for any particular interests of our own. When David was in the greatest distress and disgrace, he did not pray, *Lord, exalt me*, but, *Lord, exalt thine own name*. Thus the Son of David, when his soul was troubled, and he prayed, *Father, save me from this hour*, presently withdrew that petition, and presented this in the room of it, *for this cause came I to this hour. Father, glorify thy name*, John xii. 27, 28. Or, it may be taken as a plea to enforce his petition for deliverance, *Lord, send from heaven to save me*, and thereby thou wilt glorify thyself as the God both of heaven and earth. Our best encouragement in prayer is taken from the glory of God, and to that therefore,

more than our own comfort, we should have an eye in all our petitions for particular mercies; for this is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which regulates and directs all the rest, *Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*

7. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. 8. Awake up my glory, awake psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. 9. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. 10. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. 11. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

How strangely is the tune altered here; David's prayers and complaints, by the lively actings of faith, are here all of a sudden turned into praises and thanksgivings; his sackcloth is loosed, and he is girded with gladness, and his hallelujahs are as fervent as his hosannas. This should make us in love with prayer, that sooner or later it will be swallowed up in praise. Observe,

1. How he prepares himself for the duty of praise, *ver. 7. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed.* My heart is erect, or lifted up, so some, which was bowed down, *ver. 6. My heart is fixed,* (1.) With reference to God's providences, it is prepared for every event, being stayed upon God, Psal. cxii. 7. Isa. xxvi. 3. *My heart is fixed,* and then *none of these things move me,* Acts xx. 24. If by the grace of God we be brought into this even composed frame of spirit, we have great reason to be thankful. (2.) With reference to the worship of God; *my heart is fixed, to sing and give praise.* It is implied, that the heart is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose in religion further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be fixed; fixed for the duty, fitted and put in frame for it; fixed in the duty by a close application; attending on the Lord without distraction.

2. How he excites himself to the duty of praise, *ver. 8. Awake up my glory,* i. e. my tongue; our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God; or, my soul, that must be first awakened; dull and sleepy devotions will never be acceptable to God, we must stir up ourselves, and all that is within us to praise God; with a holy fire must that sacrifice be kindled, and ascend in a holy flame. David's tongue will lead, and his psaltery and harp will follow in these hymns of praise. *I myself will awake,* not only I will not be dead, and drowsy, and careless in this work, but I will be in the most lively frame that may be, as one newly awakened out of a refreshing sleep. He will awake early to this work, early in the morning, to begin the day with God; early in the beginnings of a mercy; when God is coming towards us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises.

3. How he pleaseth himself, and (as I may say) even prides himself in the work of praise; so far is he from being ashamed to own his obligations to God, and dependence upon him, that he resolves to praise him among the people, and to sing unto him among the nations, *ver. 9.* This intimates, (1.) That his own heart was much affected and enlarged in praising God; he would even make the earth ring with his sacred songs, that all might take notice how much he thought himself indebted to the goodness of God. (2.) That he desired to bring others in to join with him in praising God; he will publish God's praises among the people, that the knowledge, and fear, and love, of God might be propagated, and the ends of the earth might see his salvation. When David was driven out into heathen lands, he would not only not worship their gods, but he would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him wherever he went, would endeavour to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet favour of it behind him. David, in his psalms, which fill the universal church, and will to the end of time, may be said to be still praising God among the people, and singing to him among the nations, for all good people make use of his words in praising God. Thus St John in his writings is said to prophesy again before many peoples and nations, Rev. x. 11.

4. How he furnisheth himself with matter for praise, *ver. 10.* That which was the matter of his hope and comfort, *ver. 3. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth,* is here the matter of his thanksgiving, *thy mercy is great unto the heavens,* i. e. it is great beyond conception and expression, and *thy truth unto the clouds,* i. e. it is great beyond discovery, for what eye can reach that which is wrapped up in the clouds? God's mercy and truth reach to the heavens, for they will bring all such to heaven as lay up their treasure in them, and build their hopes upon them. God's mercy and truth are praised even to the heavens, i. e. by all the bright and blessed inhabitants of the upper world, who are continually raising God's praises to the highest, while David on earth is endeavouring to spread his praises to the furthest, *ver. 9.*

5. How he leaves it at last to God to glorify his own name, *ver. 11. Be thou exalted, O God.* The same word which he had used, *ver. 5.* to sum up his prayers in, he here useth again (and no vain repetition) to sum up his praises in; Lord, I desire to exalt thy name, and that all the creatures may exalt it; but what can the best of us do towards it? Lord, take the work into thine own hands; do it thyself, *be thou exalted, O God.* In the praises of the church triumphant thou art exalted to the heavens, and in the praises of the church militant, the glory is throughout all the earth; but thou art above all thy blessing and praise of both, (*Neb. ix. 5.*) and therefore, Lord, exalt thyself above the heavens, and above all the earth: Father, glorify thine own name: Thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again.

P S A L M LVIII.

It is the probable conjecture of some (Amyraldus particularly) that before Saul began to persecute David by force of arms, and raised the militia to seize him, he formed a process against him by course of law; upon which he was condemned unheard, and attainted as a traitor by the great council, or supreme court of judicature, and then proclaimed an out-law, qui caput gerit lupinum, whom any man might kill, and no man might protect: and upon occasion of passing this bill of attainder, which the elders did to curry favour with Saul, David penned this psalm, wherein, (1.) He describes their sin, and aggravates that, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) He imprecates and foretels their ruin, and the judgments which the righteous God would bring upon them for their injustice, *ver. 6—9.* Which would redound, (1.) To the comfort of the saints, *ver. 10.* (2.) To the glory of God, *ver. 11.* Sin appears here both exceeding sinful and exceeding dangerous, and God a just avenger of wrong, with which we should be affected in singing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

1. DO ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? 2. Yea, in heart you work wickedness, you weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. 3. The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. 4. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear: 5. Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

We have reason to think that this psalm refers to the malice of Saul and his janizaries against David, because it bears the same inscription, Al-taschith, and Michtam of David, with that which goes before, and that which follows, both which appear by the title to have been penned with reference to that persecution, through which God preserved him that he was not destroyed, Al-taschith, and therefore the psalms he then penned were precious to him, Michtams, David's jewels, as Dr Hammond translates it.

In these verses David, not as a king, for he was not yet come to the throne, but as a prophet in God's name, arraigns and convicts his judges, with more authority and justice than they shewed in prosecuting him. Two things he chargeth them with:

1. The corruption of their government. They were a congregation, a bench of justices, nay, perhaps, a congress or convention of the states, from whom one might have expected fair dealing, for they were men learned in the laws, had been brought up in the study of these statutes and judgments, which were so righteous, that those of other nations were not to be compared with them. One cannot think a congregation of such could be bribed and biassed with pensions, and yet it seems they were, because the son of Kish could do that for them which the son of Jesse could not, 1 Sam. xxii. 7. He had vineyards, and fields, and preferments, to give them, and therefore to please him they would do any thing right or wrong. Of all the melancholy views which Solomon took of this earth and its grievances, nothing vexed him so much, as to see that in the place of judgment wickedness was there, Eccl. iii. 16. So it was in Saul's time.

(1.) The judges would not do right, would not protect or vindicate oppressed innocency, *ver. 1. Do ye indeed speak righteousness, or judge uprightly?* No, you are far from it, your own consciences cannot but tell you that you do not discharge the trust

trust reposed in you as magistrates, by which you are obliged to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well. Is this the justice you pretend to administer? Is this the patronage, this the countenance which an honest man, and an honest cause may expect from you? remember you are sons of men, mortal and dying, and that stand upon the same level before God with the meanest of those you trample upon, and must yourselves be called to an account and judged. You are sons of men, and therefore we may appeal to yourselves, and to that law of nature which is written in every man's heart, *Do ye indeed speak righteousness?* And will not your second thoughts correct what you have done. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon what we say with this serious question, *Do we indeed speak righteousness?* That we may unsay what we have spoken amiss, and may proceed no farther in it.

(2.) They did a great deal of wrong; they used their power for the support of injury and oppression, *ver. 2. In heart you work wickedness.* All the wickedness of the life is wrought in the heart. It intimates, that they wrought with a great deal of plot and management, not by surprize, but with premeditation and design, and with a strong inclination to it, and resolution in it. The more there is of the heart in any act of wickedness, the worse it is, *Eccl. viii. 11.* And what was their wickedness? It follows, *you weigh the violence of your hands in the earth, or, in the land,* the peace of which you are appointed to be the conservators of. They did all the violence and injury they could either to enrich or revenge themselves, and they weighed it, *i. e.*

(1.) They did it with a great deal of craft and caution, you frame it by rule and lines, so the word signifies, that it may effectually answer your mischievous intentions; such masters are you of the art of oppression. (2.) They did it under colour of justice. They held the balances, (the emblem of justice) in their hands as if they designed to do right, and right is expected from them, but the result is violence and oppression, which is done the more effectually for being done under the umbrage of law and right.

2. The corruption of their nature. This was the root of bitterness from which that gall and wormwood sprung, *ver. 3. the wicked, who in heart work wickedness, are estranged from the womb,* estranged from God, and all good *alienated from the divine life,* and its principles; powers and pleasures, *Eph. iv. 18.* A sinful state is a state of estrangement from that acquaintance with God, and service of him which we were made for. Let none wonder that these wicked men dare do such things, for wickedness is bred in the bone with them, they brought it into the world with them, they have in their natures a strong inclination to it, they learned it from their wicked parents, and have been trained up in it by a bad education; they are called, and not miscalled, transgressors from the womb, one can therefore expect no other but that they will *deal very treacherously,* see *Isa. xlviii. 8.* They go astray from God and their duty as soon as they are born, *i. e.* as soon as possibly they can; the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts, presently appears with the first operations of reason; as the wheat springs up, the tares spring up with it. Three instances are here given of the corruption of nature.

(1.) Falshood. They soon learn to speak lies, and *bend their tongues like their bow* for that purpose, *Jer. ix. 3.* How soon will little children tell a lie to excuse a fault, or in their own commendation; no sooner can they speak but they speak to God's dishonour; tongue sins are some of the first of our actual transgressions.

(2.) Malice. Their poison, *i. e.* their ill-will, and the spite they bore to goodness and all good men, particularly to David, was *like the poison of a serpent,* innate, venomous, and very mischievous, and that which they can never be cured of. We pity a dog that is poisoned by accident, but hate a serpent that is poisonous by nature. Such was the cursed enmity in this serpent's brood, against the Lord and his anointed.

(3.) Untractableness. They are malicious, and nothing will work upon them, no reason, no kindness, to mollify them, and bring them to a better temper. *They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear,* *ver. 4, 5.* The psalmist having compared these wicked men, whom he here complains of, to serpents for their poisonous malice; takes occasion from thence, upon another account, to compare them to the deaf adder or viper, concerning which there was then this vulgar tradition, That whereas by musick, or some other art, they had a way of charming serpents, so as either to destroy them, or at least disable them to do mischief; this deaf adder would lay one ear to the ground, and stop the other with her tail, so that she could not hear the voice of the enchantment, and so defeated the intention of it, and secured herself. The using of this comparison doth neither verify the story, nor, if it were true, justify the use of this enchantment; for it is only an allusion to the report of such a thing, to illustrate the obstinacy of sinners in a sinful way. God's design in his word and providence, is to cure serpents of their malignity; to this end, how wise, how powerful, how well-chosen are the charms! how forcible the right words! But all in vain with the most of men; and what is

the reason? It is because they will not hearken. None so deaf as those that will not hear; we *have piped unto men, and they have not danced;* how should they, when they have stopped their ears?

6. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD. 7. Let them melt away as waters, *which* run continually: *when* he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. 8. As a snail *which* melteth, let every one of them pass away: *like* the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun. 9. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath. 10. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 11. So that a man shall say, Verily, *there is* a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

In these verses we have,

1. David's prayers against his enemies, and all the like enemies of God's church and people; for as such he looks upon them, and is acted by a publick spirit in prayer against them, and not by any private revenge.

(1.) He prays that they might be disabled to do any further mischief, *ver. 6. Break their teeth, O God.* Not so much that they might not feed themselves, as that they might not be able to make a prey of others, *Psal. iii. 7.* He doth not say, break their necks; no, let them live to repent, *slay them not, lest my people forget;* but break their teeth for they are lions, they are young lions that live by rapine.

(2.) That they might be disappointed in the plots they had already laid, and might not gain their point; *When he bendeth his bow, and takes aim to shoot his arrows* at the upright in heart, *let them be as cut in pieces,* *ver. 7.* Let them fall at his feet, and never come near the mark.

(3.) That they and their interest might waste and come to nothing; that they might *melt away as waters that run continually,* *i. e.* as the waters of a land-flood, which tho' they seem formidable for a while, soon soak into the ground, or return to their chanel; or, in general, as *water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up again,* but gradually dries away and disappears. Such shall the *floods of ungodly men* be which *make us afraid* sometimes, *Psal. xviii. 4.* so shall the proud waters be reduced which threaten to go over our soul, *Psal. cxxiv. 4, 5.* Let us by faith then see what they shall be, and then we shall not fear what they are. He prays, *ver. 8.* that they might melt as a snail, which wastes by her own motion, in every stretch it makes leaving some of its moisture behind, which by degrees must needs consume it, tho' it make a path to shine after it. He that like a snail in her house, is *plenus sui,* full of himself, that pleaseth himself, and trusts to himself, doth but consume himself, and will quickly bring himself to nothing. And he prays, that they might be *like the untimely birth of a woman,* which dies as soon as it begins to live, and never sees the sun. Job in his passion wished himself had been such a one, *Job iii. 16.* but he knew not what he said. We may in faith pray against the designs of the church's enemies, as the prophet doth, *Hos. ix. 14. Give them, O Lord, what wilt thou give them? Give them a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts.* Which explains this here.

2. His prediction of their ruin, *ver. 9.* Before your pots can feel the heat of a fire of thorns made under them, which they will presently do, for it is a quick fire, and violent while it lasts, so speedily, with such a hasty and violent flame God shall hurry them away, as terribly, and as irresistible as with a whirlwind, as it were alive, as it were in fury. The proverbial expressions are somewhat difficult, but the sense is plain; (1.) That the judgments of God oftentimes surprize wicked people in the midst of their jollity, and hurry them away of a sudden. When they are beginning to walk in the light of their own fire, and the sparks of their own kindling, they are made to *lie down in sorrow,* *Isa. l. 11.* and their laughter proves like the crackling of thorns under a pot, the comfort of which is soon gone, e'er they can say, *Alas, I am warm,* *Eccl. vii. 6.* (2.) That there is no standing before the destruction that comes from the Almighty; for *who knows the power of God's anger?* when God will take sinners away dead or alive, they cannot contest with him: *The wicked is driven away in their wickedness.*

Now there are two things which the psalmist promiseth himself would be the good effects of sinners destruction.

1. That saints would be encouraged and comforted by it, *ver. 10. The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance;* the pomp and power, the prosperity and success, of the wicked is a discouragement to the righteous, it saddens their hearts, and weakens their hands, and is sometimes a strong temptation to them to question

question their foundations, *Psal. lxxiii. 2, 13.* But when they see the judgments of God hurrying them away, and just vengeance taken on them for all the mischief they have done to the people of God, they rejoice in the satisfaction thereby given to their doubts, and the confirmation thereby given to their faith in the providence of God, and his justice and righteousness in governing of the world; they shall rejoice in the victory thus gained over that temptation, by *seeing their end, Psal. lxxiii. 17. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, i. e.* There shall be abundance of blood shed, *Psal. lxxviii. 23.* and it shall be as great a refreshment to the saints to see God glorified in the ruin of sinners, as it is to a weary traveller to have his feet washed. It shall likewise contribute to their satisfaction; the sight of the vengeance shall make them tremble before God, *Psal. cxix. 120.* and shall convince them of the evil of sin, and the obligations they lie under to that God, who pleads their cause, and will suffer no man to do them wrong, and go unpunished for it. The joy of the saints in the destruction of the wicked, is then a holy joy, and justifiable when it helps to make them holy, and to purify them from sin.

2. That sinners would be convinced and converted by it, *ver. 1.* The vengeance God sometimes takes on the wicked in this world, will bring men to say, *Verily, there is a reward for the righteous.* Any man may draw this inference from such providences, and many a man shall, who before denied even these plain truths, or doubted of them. Some shall have this confession extorted from them, others shall have their minds so changed, that they shall willingly own it, and thank God who has given them to see it, and see it with satisfaction: That God is, and (1.) That he is the bountiful rewarder of his saints and servants. *Verily,* (however it be, so it may be read) *there is a fruit to the righteous,* whatever damage a man may sustain, whatever hazard he may run, and whatever hardship he may undergo, for his religion, he shall not only be no loser, but an unspeakable gainer by it in the issue. Even in this world there is a reward for the righteous, they shall be recompensed in the earth. They shall be taken notice of, honoured and protected, that seemed slighted, despised, and abandoned. (2.) That he is the righteous governor of the world, and will surely reckon with the enemies of his kingdom. *Verily,* however it be, tho' wicked people prosper, and bid defiance to divine justice; yet it shall be made to appear to their confusion, that the world is not governed by chance, but by a Being of infinite wisdom and justice; there is a God that judgeth in the earth, tho' he has prepared his throne in the heavens. He presides in all the affairs of the children of men, and directs and disposeth them according to the counsel of his will to his own glory; and he will punish the wicked not only in the world to come, but in the earth, where they have laid up their treasure, and promised themselves a happiness: In the earth, that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executeth, and they may be taken as earnest of a judgment to come. He is a God, (so we read it) not a weak man, not an angel, not a meer name, not (as the atheists suggest) a creature of mens fear and fancy, not a deified hero, not the sun and moon, as idolaters imagined; but a God, a self-existent, perfect being, he it is that judgeth the earth, his favour therefore let us seek, from whom every man's judgment proceeds, and to him let all judgment be referred.

P S A L M LIX.

This psalm is of the same nature and scope with six or seven foregoing psalms; they are all David's complaints of the malice of his enemies, and of their cursed and cruel designs against him: His prayers and prophecies against them; and his comfort and confidence in God as his God: The first is the language of nature, and may be allowed: The second of a prophetic spirit, looking forward to Christ, and the enemies of his kingdom, and therefore not to be drawn into a precedent: The third of grace, and a most holy faith, which ought to be imitated by every one of us. In this psalm, (1.) He prays to God to defend and deliver him from his enemies, representing them as very ill men, barbarous, malicious, and atheistical, *ver. 1—7.* (2.) He foresees and foretels the destruction of his enemies, which he would give to God the glory of, *ver. 8—17.* As far as it appears that any of the particular enemies of God's people fall under these characters, we may in singing this psalm read their doom, and foresee their ruin.

¶ To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David: when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

1. **D**ELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. 2. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and No. xlii.

save me from bloody men. 3. For lo, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD. 4. They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me, and behold. 5. Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah. 6. They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 7. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips; for who (say they) doth hear?

The title of this psalm acquaints us particularly with the occasion on which it was penned, it was when Saul sent a party of his guards to beset David's house in the night, that they might seize him and kill him; we have the story, *1 Sam. xix. 11.* It was when his hostilities against David were newly begun, and he had but just before narrowly escaped Saul's javelin. These first eruptions of Saul's malice could not but put David into disorder, and be both grievous and terrifying, and yet he kept up his communion with God, and such a composure of mind, as that he was never out of frame for prayer and praises; happy they whose intercourse with heaven is not intercepted or broken in upon by their cares, or griefs, or fears, or any of the hurries (whether outward or inward) of an afflicted state.

In these verses,

1. David prays to be delivered out of the hands of his enemies, and that their cruel designs against him might be defeated, *ver. 12. Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God,* thou art God and canst deliver me; my God, under whose protection I have put my self, and thou hast promised me to be a God all-sufficient, and therefore in honour and faithfulness thou wilt deliver me. Set me on high out of the reach of the power and malice of them that rise up against me, and above the fear of it. Let me be safe, and see my self so, safe and easy, safe and satisfied. O deliver me, and save me. He cries out as one ready to perish, and that had his eye to God only for salvation and deliverance. He prays, *ver. 4. Awake to help me,* take cognizance of my case, behold that with an eye of pity, and exert thy power for my relief. Thus the disciples in the storm awoke Christ saying, *Master, save us, we perish.* And thus earnestly should we pray daily, to be defended and delivered from our spiritual enemies, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of our own hearts, which war against our spiritual life.

2. He pleads for deliverance. Our God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him, to order our cause before him, and to fill our mouth with arguments; not to move him, but to move our selves; David doth so here.

1. He pleads the ill character of his enemies; they are workers of iniquity, and therefore not only his enemies, but God's enemies; they are bloody men, and therefore not only his enemies, but enemies to all mankind; Lord, let not the workers of iniquity prevail against one that is a worker of righteousness; nor bloody men, against a merciful man.

2. He pleads their malice against him, and the imminent danger he was in from them, *ver. 3.* Their spite is great, they aim at my soul, my life, my better part; they are subtle and very politick, they lie in wait, taking an opportunity to do me a mischief; they are all mighty, men of honour and estates, and interest in court and country; they are in a confederacy, they are united by league, and actually gathered together against me; combined both in consultation and action. They are very ingenious in their contrivances, and very industrious in the prosecution of them, *ver. 4. They run and prepare themselves,* with the utmost speed and fury to do me a mischief. He takes particular notice of the brutish carriage of the messengers that Saul sent to take him, *ver. 6. They return at evening* from the posts assigned them in the day, to apply themselves to their works of darkness, (their night-work, which may well be their day-shame) and then they make a noise like a hound in pursuit of the hare: Thus did David's enemies when they came to take him, raise an out-cry against him as a rebel, and a traitor, and a man not fit to live; with this clamour they went round about the city, to put David into an ill name, if possible, to set the mob against him, at least to prevent their being incensed against them, which otherwise they had reason to fear they would be, so much was David their darling. Thus the persecutors of our Lord Jesus, who are compared to dogs, *Psal. xxii. 16.* run him down with noise, for else they could not have taken him, at least not on the feast-day, lest there should be an uproar among the people. They belch out with their mouth the malice that boils in their hearts, *ver. 7. Swords are in their lips, i. e.* Reproaches that wound my heart with grief, *Psal. xlii. 10.* and slanders that wound my reputation, and stab that: They were continually suggesting that which drew and whet Saul's sword against him, and the fault is laid upon the false accusers: The sword perhaps had not been in Saul's hand, if it had not been first in their lips.

3. He pleads his own innocence, not as to God, he was never backward to own himself guilty before him, but as to his persecutors; what they charged him with was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done any thing to deserve such treatment from them, *ver. 3. Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord, thou knowest, who knowest all things.* And again, *ver. 4. without my fault.* Note, (1.) The innocence of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves, yet for Christ's sake are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly. (2.) Tho' our innocence will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves well towards those that behave themselves ill towards us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. (3.) If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocence, we may with humble confidence appeal to God, and beg of him to plead our injured cause, which he will do in due time.

4. He pleads that his enemies were profane and atheistical, and bolstered themselves up in their enmity to David, with the contempt of God; *For who (say they) doth hear?* *ver. 7.* Not God himself, *Psal. x. 11.—xciv. 8.* Note, It is not strange, if those regard not what they say, who have made themselves believe that God regards not what they say.

3. He refers himself and his cause to the just judgment of God, *ver. 5.* The Lord, the Judge, be judge between him and his persecutors! In this appeal to God he has an eye to him, as the Lord of hosts that has power to execute judgment, having all creatures, even hosts of angels at his command: And as the God of Israel, to whom he was in a peculiar manner King and Judge, and would appear on the behalf of those that are upright, that are Israelites indeed. When Saul's hosts persecuted him, he had recourse to God as the Lord of all hosts; when those maligned him whose spirit were stranger to the common-wealth of Israel, he had recourse to God as the God of Israel. He desires, (*i. e.* he is very sure) that God will awake to visit all the nations, will make an early and exact enquiry into the controversies and quarrels that are among the children of men; there will be a day of visitation, *Isa. x. 3.* and to that day David refers himself with this solemn appeal, *Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors; Selah;* mark that. (1.) If David were conscious to himself that he was a wicked transgressor, he would not expect to find mercy: But as to his enemies he could say, he was no transgressor at all, *ver. 3, 4. Not for my transgression,* and therefore thou wilt appear for me: As to God, he could say he was no wicked transgressor; for tho' he had transgressed, he was a penitent transgressor, and did not obstinately persist in what he had done amiss. (2.) He knew his enemies were wicked transgressors, wilful, and malicious, and hardened in their transgressions, both against God and man, and therefore he sues for justice against them; judgment without mercy. Let not those expect to find mercy who never shewed mercy, for such are wicked transgressors.

8. But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. 9. *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence.* 10. The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. 11. Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield. 12. *For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak.* 13. Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob, unto the ends of the earth. Selah. 14. And at evening let them return, and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied. 16. But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. 17. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

David here encourageth himself in reference to the threatening power of his enemies, with a pious resolution to wait upon God, and a believing expectation that he should yet praise him.

1. He resolves to wait upon God, *ver. 9. Because of his strength,* either the strength of his enemies, the fear of which drove him to God, or because of God's strength, the hope of which drew him to God, *will I wait upon thee,* with a believing dependence upon thee, and confidence in thee. It is our wisdom and duty in times of danger and difficulty to wait upon God; for he is our defence, our high place, in whom we shall be safe. He hopes,

(1.) That God will be to him a God of mercy, *ver. 10. The God of my mercy shall prevent me* with the blessings of his goodness, and the gifts of his mercy; prevent my fears, prevent my prayers, and be better to me than my own expectations. It is very comfortable to us in prayer to eye God, not only as the God of mercy, but as the God of our mercy, the author of all good in us, and the giver of all good to us. Whatever mercy there is in God, it is laid up for us, and is ready to be laid out upon us. Justly doth the psalmist call God's mercy his mercy, for all the blessings of the new covenant are called *the sure mercies of David*, *Isa. lv. 3.* And they are *sure to all the seed.*

(2.) That he will be to his persecutors a God of vengeance. His expectation of this he expresseth partly by way of prediction, and partly by way of petition, which comes all to one; for his prayer that it might be so, amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so: And so here are several things which he foretels concerning his enemies, or observers, that sought occasions against him, and opportunity to do him a mischief; in all which he should see his desire, not a passionate or revengeful desire, but a believing desire upon them, *ver. 10.*

1. He foresees that God would expose them to scorn, as they had indeed made themselves ridiculous, *ver. 8.* They think God doth not hear them, doth not heed them, but thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them for their folly, to think that he that planted the ear shall not hear, and thou shalt hear not them only, but all other such heathenish people that live without God in the world, *in derision.* Note, Atheists and persecutors are worthy to be laughed at, and had in derision. See *Psal. ii. Prov. i. 26. Ija. xxxvii. 22.*

2. That God would make them standing monuments of his justice, *ver. 11. Slay them not,* let them not be killed outright, lest my people forget. If the execution be soon done, the impressions of it will not be deep, and therefore will not be durable, but will quickly wear off; swift destructions startle men for the present, but they are soon forgotten; for which reason he prays that this might be gradual, *scatter them by thy power,* and let them carry about with them, in their wanderings, such tokens of God's displeasure as may spread the notice of their punishment to all parts of the country. Thus Cain himself, though a murderer, was not slain, lest the vengeance should be forgotten, but was sentenced to be a fugitive and a vagabond. Note, When we think God's judgments come slowly upon sinners, we must conclude, that God has wise and holy ends in the gradual proceedings of his wrath. So scatter them, as that they may never again unite to do mischief, *bring them down, O Lord, our shield.* If God have undertaken the protection of his people as their shield, he will doubtless humble and abase all those that fight against them.

3. That they might be dealt with according to their deserts, *ver. 12. For the sin of their mouth, even for the words of their lips;* for every word they speak has sin in it, let them for this be taken in their pride, even for their cursing others and themselves (a sin Saul was subject to, *1 Sam. xiv. 28, 44.*) and lying. Note, (1.) There is a great deal of malignity in tongue-sins, more than is commonly thought of. (2.) Cursing, and lying, and speaking proudly are some of the worst of the sins of the tongue, and that man is truly miserable whom God deals with according to the desert of these, *making his own tongue to fall on them.*

4. That God would glorify himself as Israel's God and King in their destruction, *ver. 13. Consume them in wrath, consume them, i. e.* follow them with one judgment after another till they be utterly ruined, let them be sensibly but gradually wasted, that they themselves, while they are in the consuming, may know, and that the standers-by may likewise draw this inference from it, *That God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth.* Saul and his party think to rule and carry all before them, but they shall be made to know that there is a Higher than they, that there is one who doth and will over-rule them. The design of God's judgments is to convince men that the Lord reigns, that he fulfils his own counsels, gives law to all the creatures, and disposeth all things to his own glory, so that the greatest of men are under his check, and he makes what use he pleases of them. He rules in Jacob, for there he keeps his court, there he is known, and his name is great; but he rules to the end of the earth, for all nations are within the territories of his kingdom. He rules to the ends of the earth, even over those that know him not, but he rules for Jacob, so it may be read; he has an eye to the good of his church in the government of the world; the administrations of that government even to the ends of the earth, are for Jacob his servant's sake, and for Israel's his elect, *Isa. xlv. 4.*

5. That he would make their sin their punishment, *ver. 14.* compare *ver. 6.* Their sin was hunting for David, to make a prey of him; their punishment should be, that they should be reduced to such extreme poverty, that they should hunt about for meat to satisfy their hunger, and should miss of it as they missed of David: Thus they should be, not cut off at once, but scattered, *ver. 11.* and gradually consumed, *ver. 13.* they that die by famine die by inches, and feel themselves die, *Lam. iv. 9.*

iv. 9. He foretels, that they should be forced to beg their bread from door to door. (1.) That they should do it with the greatest regret and reluctance imaginable; to beg they are ashamed (which makes it the greater punishment to them) and therefore they do it at evening, when it begins to be dark, that they may not be seen; at the time when other beasts of prey creep forth, *Psal. civ. 20.* (2.) That yet they should be very clamorous and loud in their complaints, which would proceed from a great indignation at their condition, which they cannot, in the least degree, reconcile themselves to; *They shall make a noise like a dog.* When they were in quest of David, they made a noise like an angry dog snarling and barking; now when they are in quest of meat, they shall make a noise like a hungry dog howling and wailing. Those that repent of their sins when they are in trouble, *mourn like doves*; those whose hearts are hardened when they are in trouble, make a noise like dogs, *like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord.* See *Hof. vii. 14.* *They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled on their beds for corn and wine.* (3.) That they should meet with little relief, but the hearts of people should be very much hardened towards them; so that they should go round about the city, and wander up and down for meat, ver. 15. and should get nothing but by dint of importunity, according to our marginal reading, *If they be not satisfied they will tarry all night*; so that what people do give them is not with good-will, but only to be rid of them, lest by their continual coming they weary them. (4.) That they should be insatiable, which is the greatest misery of all in a poor condition, *They are greedy dogs which can never have enough,* *Isa. lvi. 11.* and they grudge if they be not satisfied. A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet doth not grudge, doth not quarrel with providence, nor fret within himself; but those whose God is their belly, if that be not filled, and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent that makes a man unhappy.

2. He expects to praise God, that God's providence would find him matter for praise, and that God's grace would work in him a heart for praise, ver. 16, 17. Observe.

(1.) What he would praise God for. (1.) He would praise his power and his mercy, both should be the subject matter of his song: Power without mercy is to be dreaded; mercy without power is not what a man can expect much benefit from; but God's power by which he is able to help us, and his mercy by which he is inclined to help us, will justly be the everlasting praise of all the faints. (2.) He would praise him because he had many a time, and all along found him his defence, and his refuge in the day of trouble. God brings his people into trouble, that they may experience his power and mercy in protecting and sheltering them, and may have occasion to praise him. (3.) He would praise him because he had still a dependence upon him, and a confidence in him, as his strength to support him and carry him on, in his duty, his defence to keep him safe from evil, and the God of his mercy to make him happy and easy. He that is all this to us, is certainly worthy of our best affections, praises, and services.

(2.) How he would praise God. (1.) He would sing. As that is a natural expression of joy, so it is an instituted ordinance for the exerting and exciting of his holy joy and thankfulness. (2.) He would sing aloud, as one much affected with the glory of God that was not ashamed to own it, and that desired to affect others with it. He will sing of God's power, but he will sing aloud of his mercy; the consideration of that raises his affections more than any thing else. (3.) He would sing aloud in the morning, when his spirits were most fresh and lively; God's compassions are new every morning, and therefore it is fit to begin the day with his praises. (4.) He would sing unto God, ver. 17. to his honour and glory, and with him in his eye. As we must direct our prayers to God, so to him we must direct our praises and must look up; making melody to the Lord.

P S A L M LX.

After many psalms which David penned in a day of distress, this comes, which was calculated for a day of triumph; it was penned after he was settled in the throne, upon occasion of an illustrious victory which God blessed his forces with over the Syrians and Edomites: It was when David was in the zenith of his prosperity, and the affairs of his kingdom seem to have been in a better posture than ever they were either before or after. See 2 Sam. viii. 3, 13. 1 Chron. xviii. 3, 12. David, in prosperity, was as devout as David in adversity. In this psalm (1.) He reflects upon the ill state of the publick interests for many years, in which God had been contending with them, ver. 1—3. (2.) He takes notice of the happy turn lately given to their affairs, ver. 4. (3.) He prays for the deliverance of God's Israel from their enemies, ver. 5. (4.) He triumphs in the hope of their

victories over their enemies, and begs of God to carry them on and compleat them, ver. 6—12. In singing this psalm we may have an eye both to the acts of the church, and to the state of our own souls, both which have their struggles.

¶ To the chief musician, upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach when he strove with Aram-naharaim, and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt, twelve thousand.

1. O GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thy self to us again. 2. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh. 3. Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. 4. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee: that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah. 5. That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me.

The title gives us an account, (1.) Of the general design of the psalm; it is Michtam, David's jewel, and it is to teach. The Levites must teach it the people, and by it teach them both to trust in God, and to triumph in him; we must in it teach our selves and one another. In a day of publick rejoicing, we have need to be taught to direct our joy to God, and to terminate it in him, to give none of that praise to the instruments of our deliverance which is due to him only, and to encourage our hopes with our joys. (2.) Of the particular occasion of it: It was at a time (1.) When he was in war with the Syrians, and still had a conflict with them, both those of Mesopotamia, and those of Zobah. (2.) When he had gained a great victory over the Edomites by his forces under the command of Joab, who had left twelve thousand of the enemy dead upon the spot. David has an eye to both these concerns in this psalm; he is in care about his strife with the Assyrians, and in reference to that he prays. He is rejoicing in his success against the Edomites, and with reference to that he triumphs, with a holy confidence in God, that he would compleat the victory. We have our cares at the same time that we have our joys, and they may serve for a balance to each other, that neither may exceed: They may likewise furnish us with matter both for prayer and praise, for both must be laid before God with suitable affections and devotions. If one point be gained, yet in another we are still striving: The Edomites are vanquished, but the Syrians are not; therefore let not him that girdeth on the harness, boast as if he had put it off.

In these verses which begin the psalm we have,

1. A melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments, which God had for some years past put the people under. During the reign of Saul, especially in the latter end of it, and during David's struggle with the house of Saul, while he reigned over Judah only, the affairs of the kingdom were much perplexed, and the neighbour nations were vexatious to them. (1.) He complains of hard things which they had seen, *i. e.* which they had suffered, ver. 3. while the Philistines and other ill neighbours took all advantages against them. God sometimes shews even his own people hard things in this world, that they may not take up their rest in it, but may dwell at ease in him only. (2.) He owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships they had undergone. *Thou hast been displeased* by us, displeased against us, ver. 1. and in thy displeasure hast cast us off, and scattered us, hast put us out of thy protection, else our enemies could not have prevailed thus against us. They had never picked us up and made a prey of us, if thou hadst not broke the staff of bands, (*Zech. xi. 14.*) by which we were united, and so scattered us. Whatever our trouble is, and whoever are the instruments of it, we must own the hand of God, his righteous hand, in it. (3.) He laments the ill effects and consequences of the miscarriages of the late years. The whole nation was in a convulsion; thou hast made the earth to tremble, or the land. The generality of the people had dreadful apprehensions of the issue of these things; the good people themselves were in a consternation; Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment; we were like men intoxicated, and at our wit's end; not knowing how to reconcile these dispensations with God's promises and his relation to his people; we are at a gaze, can do nothing, nor know we what to do.

Now this is mentioned here to teach, *i. e.* for the instruction of the people. When God is turning his hand in our favours, it is good to remember our former calamities. (1.) That we may retain the good impressions they made upon us, and may have them revived. Our souls must still have the affliction and the misery in remembrance, that they may be humbled within

us, Lam. iii. 19, 20. (2.) That God's goodness to us in relieving and raising us up, may be more magnified; for it is as life from the dead, so strange, so refreshing. Our calamities serve as foils to our joys. (3.) That we may not be secure, but may always rejoice with trembling, as those that know not how soon we may be returned into the furnace again, which we were lately taken out of, as the silver is when it is not thoroughly refined.

2. A thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope that though things had been long bad, they would now begin to mend, *ver. 4. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee*, (for as bad as the times are, there is a remnant among us that desire to fear thy name, for whom thou hast a tender concern) *that it may be displayed by thee, because of the truth of thy promise, which thou wilt perform; and to be displayed by them, in defence of truth and equity, Psal. xlv. 4.* This banner was David's government, the establishment and enlargement of it over all Israel; the pious Israelites, who feared God, and had a regard to the divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and like the lifting up of a banner to them. (1.) It united them, as soldiers are gathered together to their colours; they that were scattered, *ver. 1.* divided among themselves, and so weakened and exposed, when he was fixed upon the throne coalesced in him. (2.) It animated them, and put life and courage into them, as the soldiers are heartened by the sight of their banner. (3.) It struck a terror upon their enemies; to whom they could now hang out a flag of defiance. Christ, the son of David, is given *for an ensign of the people, Isa. xi. 10.* for a banner to those that fear God; in him, as the center of their unity, they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory, and take courage; his love is the banner over them, and in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness; and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

An humble petition for seasonable mercy.

(1.) That God would be reconciled to them, though he had been displeased with them. In his displeasure their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin, *O turn thy self to us again, ver. 1.* smile upon us, and take part with us; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia.*

(2.) That they might be reconciled to one another, though they had been broken and wretchedly divided among themselves; *Heal the breaches of our land, ver. 2.* not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among ourselves by our unhappy divisions. Those are breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, and which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can make up, and repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace; by which only a shaken, shattered, kingdom is set to rights, and saved from ruin.

(3.) That thus they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies, *ver. 3. That thy beloved may be delivered, and not made a prey of, save with thy right hand, with thine own power, and by such instruments as thou art pleased to make the men of thy right hand, and hear me.* They that fear God, are his beloved; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; they are often in distress, but they shall be delivered; God's own right hand shall save them, for they that have his heart, have his hand. *Save them, and hear me.* Note, God's praying people may take the general deliverances of the church, as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the publick, and those blessings be bestowed, besides the share we have with others in the benefit of them, we may each of us say with a peculiar satisfaction, God has therein heard me, and answered me.

6. God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 7. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver. 8. Moab is my washpot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. 9. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 10. Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? 11. Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man. 12. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

David is here rejoicing in hope, and praying in hope; such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in possession, as of what they have in prospect, *ver. 6. God hath spoken in his holiness, i. e.* He hath given me his word of promise, has sworn by his holiness, and

he will not lie unto David, Psal. lxxxix. 35. therefore I will rejoice, and please myself with the hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise. Note, God's word of promise being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

Two things David here rejoiceth in the prospect of.

1. The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God having spoken in his holiness that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand, *I will divide Shechem, a pleasant city in mount Ephraim, and mete out the valley of Succoth, as my own; ver. 7. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine, and both entirely reduced; Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards, and his standing-forces; Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice, and thus Ephraim would be the strength of his head, and Judah his lawgiver.* Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ: *God hath spoken in his holiness, and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God himself mine; All is yours, for you are Christs, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.*

2. The conquering of the neighbour nations, that had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David, *ver. 8. Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the meanest drudgery; The Moabites became Davids servants, 2 Sam. viii. 2.* Edom shall be made a dunghill to throw old shoes upon, at least, David shall take possession of it as his own, which was signified by drawing off his shoe over it, *Ruth iv. 7.* And as for the Philistines, let them, if they dare, triumph over him as they had done; he will soon force them to change their note; rather let those that know their own interest triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them, to be brought into subjection to David, and communion with Israel.

But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a strong city, Rabbah (perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out, Edom is not yet subdued. Now (1.) David is here enquiring for help to carry on the war, *Who will bring me into the strong city? What allies, auxiliaries can I depend upon to make me master of the enemies country, and their strong-holds? They that have begun a good work, cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection.* (2.) He is expecting it from God only; *Wilt not thou, O God? for thou hast spoken in thine holiness: And wilt not thou be as good as thy word? He takes notice of the frowns of providence they had been under, Thou hadst in appearance cast us off, thou didst not go forth with our armies; when they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted, that is, because they had forfeited, the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly off from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him; and the less he has done for them of late, the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was passed, they hoped in his mercy for what was to come. Tho' thou hadst cast us off, yet thou wilt not contend for ever, thou wilt not always chide; tho' thou hadst cast us off, yet thou hast begun to shew mercy, and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun? The Son of David in his sufferings seemed to be cast off by his Father, when he cried out, Why hast thou forsaken me? And yet even then he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness, and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he is gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, through him likewise are more than conquerors: Tho' sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last: Vincimur in prælio, sed non in bello. A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly; but that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.*

2. He prays in hope. His prayer is, *Give us help from trouble, ver. 11.* Even in the day of their triumph, they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is troublesome even to the prevailing side: None therefore can delight in war, but those that love to fish in troubled waters: The help from trouble they pray for, is, preservation from those they were at war with. Tho' now they were conquerors, yet (so uncertain are the issues of war) unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might go by the worst; therefore, *Lord, send us help from the sanctuary. Help from trouble, is rest from war; which they prayed for, as those that contended for equity, not for victory, sic querimus pacem.*

The hope with which they support themselves in this prayer, has two things in it. (1.) A diffidence of themselves, and all their creature-confidences; *Vain is the help of man;* and then only we are qualified to receive help from God, when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do. (2.) A confidence in God, and in his power and promise, *ver. 12. Through God we shall do valiantly,*

valiantly, and so we shall do victoriously; for he it is, and he only, that shall tread down our enemies; and shall have the praise of it. Note, 1. Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding, that it must encourage and quicken our endeavours in the way of our duty. Though it is God that performeth all things for us, yet there is something to be done by us. 2. Hope in God is the best principle of true courage: Those that do their duty under his conduct, may afford to do it valiantly; for what need they fear, who have God on their side? 3. It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; it is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution. 4. Though we do never so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for *he it is that shall tread down our enemies*, and not we ourselves. All our victories as well as our valour are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crowns must be cast.

P S A L M LXI.

David in this psalm, as in many others, begins with a sad heart, but concludes with an air of pleasantness; begins with prayers and tears, but ends with songs of praise. Thus the soul, by being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself. It should seem David was driven out and banished when he penned this psalm, whether by Saul or Absalom is uncertain: some think by Absalom, because he calls himself the king, ver. 6. but that refers to the king Messiah. David in this psalm resolves to persevere in his duty, encouraged thereto both by experience, and by his expectations. (1.) He will call upon God, because God had protected him, ver. 1—3. (2.) He will call upon God, because God had provided well for him, ver. 4, 5. (3.) He will praise God, because he had an assurance of the continuance of God's favour to him, ver. 6, 7, 8. So that in singing this psalm, we may find that which is very expressive both of our faith and of our hope, of our prayers and of our praises: And some passages in this psalm are very peculiar.

¶ To the chief musician upon Neginah,
A psalm of David.

1. **H**EAR my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer. 2. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. 3. For thou hast been a shelter for me: and a strong tower from the enemy. 4. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

In these verses we may observe,

1. David's close adherence and application to God by prayer in the day of his distress and trouble; whatever comes, *I will cry unto thee*, ver. 2. Not to cry to other gods, but to thee only; not fall out with thee because thou afflictest me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee; not speak to thee in a cold and careless manner, but cry to thee with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go, except thou bless me. This he will do (1.) Notwithstanding his distance from the sanctuary, the house of prayer, where he used to attend as in the court of requests. *From the end of the earth*, or of the land, from the most remote and obscure corner of the country, *will I cry unto thee*. Note, Wherever we are, we may have liberty of access to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace, *undique ad caelos tantundem est via*. Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore I will cry unto thee. Note, That which separates us from our other comforts, should drive us so much the nearer to God, the fountain of all comfort. (2.) Notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit; though *my heart is overwhelmed*, it is not so sunk, so burthened, but that it may be lifted up to God in prayer; if it is not capable of being thus raised, it is certainly too much cast down. Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore I will cry unto thee, for by that means it will be supported and relieved. Note, Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. *Is any afflicted? let him pray*, Jam. v. 13. Psal. cii. tit.

2. The particular petition he put up to God when his heart was overwhelmed, and he was ready to sink, *Lead me to the rock that is higher than I*; i. e. (1.) To the rock which is too high for me to get up to, unless thou help me to it; Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety, as

No. xlii.

I can never attain to, but by thy special grace working such a faith in me. (2.) To the rock on the top of which I shall be set further out of the reach of my troubles, and nearer the serene and quiet region, than I can be by any power or wisdom of my own. God's power and promise, is a rock that is higher than we: This rock is Christ; they are safe that are in him. We cannot get upon this rock, unless God by his power lead us. *I will put thee in the cleft of the rock*, Exod. xxxiii. 22. We should therefore by faith and prayer put ourselves under a divine conduct, that we may be taken under a divine direction.

3. His desire and expectation of an answer of peace: He begs in faith, ver. 1. *Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer*, i. e. Let me have the present comfort of knowing that I am heard, Psal. xx. 6. and in due let me have that which I pray for.

4. The ground of this expectation, and the plea he useth to enforce his petition, ver. 3. *Thou hast been a shelter for me*, I have found in thee a rock higher than I, therefore I trust thou wilt still lead me to that rock. Note, Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they should encourage us to hope that it will not be in vain. *Thou hast been my strong tower from the enemy*, and thou art as strong as ever, and thy name as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was, Prov. xviii. 10.

5. His resolution to continue in the way of duty to God, and dependence on him, ver. 4. (1.) The service of God shall be his constant work and business: all those must make it so, who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower: none but his menial servants have the benefit of his protection; *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever*. David was now banished from the tabernacle, which was his greatest grievance, but he is assured that God by his providence would bring him back to his tabernacle, because he had by his grace wrought in him such a kindness for the tabernacle, as that he was resolved to make it his perpetual residence, Psal. xxvii. 4. He speaks of abiding in it for ever, because that tabernacle was a type and figure of heaven, Heb. ix. 8, 9, 24. And those that dwell in God's tabernacle as it is a house of duty, during their short ever on earth, shall dwell in that tabernacle which is the house of glory during an endless ever. (2.) The grace of God, and the covenant of grace, shall be his constant comfort; *I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings*, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a shelter to them, ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage they have that abide in God's tabernacle; that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

5. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. 6. Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations. 7. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth: which may preserve him. 8. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

In these verses we may observe,

1. With what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly, ver. 5. *Thou, O God, hast heard my vows*, i. e. (1.) The vows themselves which I made, and with which I bound my soul; thou hast taken notice of them; thou hast accepted them because made in sincerity, and been well-pleased with them; thou hast been mindful of them, and put me in mind of them; God put Jacob in mind of his vows, Gen. xxxi. 13.—xxxv. 1. Note, God is a witness to all our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David here, why we should perform our vows, ver. 8. For he that hears the vows we made, will make us hear from them if they be not made good. (2.) The prayers that went along with those vows; those thou hast graciously heard and answered; which encouraged him now to pray, *O God, hear my cry*. He that never did say to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain, will not now begin to say so. Thou hast heard my vows, and given a real answer to them; for *thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name*. Note, (1.) There is a peculiar people in the world that fear God's name, that with a holy awe and reverence accept of, and accommodate themselves to, all the discoveries he is pleased to make of himself to the children of men. (2.) There is a heritage peculiar to that peculiar people, present comforts, earnest of their future bliss. God himself is their inheritance, their portion for ever. The Levites that had God for their inheritance, must take up with him, and not expect a lot like their brethren: so those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain if they have but little of the world. (3.) We need desire no better heritage than that of those which fear God. If God deal

us, Lam. iii. 19, 20. (2.) That God's goodness to us in relieving and raising us up, may be more magnified; for it is as life from the dead, so strange, so refreshing. Our calamities serve as foils to our joys. (3.) That we may not be secure, but may always rejoice with trembling, as those that know not how soon we may be returned into the furnace again, which we were lately taken out of, as the silver is when it is not thoroughly refined.

2. A thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope that though things had been long bad, they would now begin to mend, ver. 4. *Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee*, (for as bad as the times are, there is a remnant among us that desire to fear thy name, for whom thou hast a tender concern) *that it may be displayed by thee, because of the truth of thy promise, which thou wilt perform; and to be displayed by them, in defence of truth and equity*, Psal. xlv. 4. This banner was David's government, the establishment and enlargement of it over all Israel; the pious Israelites, who feared God, and had a regard to the divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and like the lifting up of a banner to them. (1.) It united them, as soldiers are gathered together to their colours; they that were scattered, ver. 1. divided among themselves, and so weakened and exposed, when he was fixed upon the throne coalesced in him. (2.) It animated them, and put life and courage into them, as the soldiers are heartened by the sight of their banner. (3.) It struck a terror upon their enemies; to whom they could now hang out a flag of defiance. Christ, the son of David, is given *for an ensign of the people*, Isa. xi. 10. for a banner to those that fear God; in him, as the center of their unity, they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory, and take courage; his love is the banner over them, and in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness; and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

An humble petition for seasonable mercy.

(1.) That God would be reconciled to them, though he had been displeased with them. In his displeasure their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin, *O turn thy self to us again*, ver. 1. smile upon us, and take part with us; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*.

(2.) That they might be reconciled to one another, though they had been broken and wretchedly divided among themselves; *Heal the breaches of our land*, ver. 2. not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among ourselves by our unhappy divisions. Those are breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, and which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can make up, and repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace; by which only a shaken, shattered, kingdom is set to rights, and saved from ruin.

(3.) That thus they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies, ver. 3. *That thy beloved may be delivered*, and not made a prey of, *save with thy right hand*, with thine own power, and by such instruments as thou art pleased to make the men of thy right hand, and *hear me*. They that fear God, are his beloved; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; they are often in distress, but they shall be delivered; God's own right hand shall save them, for they that have his heart, have his hand. *Save them, and hear me*. Note, God's praying people may take the general deliverances of the church, as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the publick, and those blessings be bestowed, besides the share we have with others in the benefit of them, we may each of us say with a peculiar satisfaction, God has therein heard me, and answered me.

6. God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 7. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver. 8. Moab is my washpot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. 9. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 10. Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? 11. Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man. 12. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

David is here rejoicing in hope, and praying in hope; such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in possession, as of what they have in prospect, ver. 6. *God hath spoken in his holiness, i. e.* He hath given me his word of promise, has sworn by his holiness, and

he will not lie unto David, Psal. lxxxix. 35. therefore I will rejoice, and please myself with the hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise. Note, God's word of promise being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

Two things David here rejoiceth in the prospect of.

1. The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God having spoken in his holiness that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand, *I will divide Shechem*, a pleasant city in mount Ephraim, *and mete out the valley of Succoth*, as my own; ver. 7. *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine*, and both entirely reduced; Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards, and his standing-forces; Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice, and thus Ephraim would be the strength of his head, and Judah his lawgiver. Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ: *God hath spoken in his holiness*, and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God himself mine; *All is yours, for you are Christs*, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

2. The conquering of the neighbour nations, that had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David, ver. 8. Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the meanest drudgery; *The Moabites became Davids servants*, 2 Sam. viii. 2. Edom shall be made a dunghill to throw old shoes upon, at least, David shall take possession of it as his own, which was signified by *drawing off his shoe over it*, Ruth iv. 7. And as for the Philistines, let them, if they dare, triumph over him as they had done; he will soon force them to change their note; rather let those that know their own interest triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them, to be brought into subjection to David, and communion with Israel.

But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a strong city, Rabbah (perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out, Edom is not yet subdued. Now (1.) David is here enquiring for help to carry on the war, *Who will bring me into the strong city?* What allies, auxiliaries can I depend upon to make me master of the enemies country, and their strong-holds? They that have begun a good work, cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection. (2.) He is expecting it from God only; *Wilt not thou, O God?* for thou hast spoken in thine holiness: And wilt not thou be as good as thy word? He takes notice of the frowns of providence they had been under, *Thou hadst in appearance cast us off, thou didst not go forth with our armies*; when they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted, that is, because they had forfeited, the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly off from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him; and the less he has done for them of late, the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was passed, they hoped in his mercy for what was to come. *Tho' thou hadst cast us off*, yet thou wilt not contend for ever, thou wilt not always chide; *tho' thou hadst cast us off*, yet thou hast begun to shew mercy, and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun? The Son of David in his sufferings seemed to be cast off by his Father, when he cried out, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* And yet even then he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness, and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he is gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, through him likewise are more than conquerors: *Tho' sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last: Vincimur in praelio, sed non in bello*. A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that *the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly*; but that it is *our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom*.

2. He prays in hope. His prayer is, *Give us help from trouble*, ver. 11. Even in the day of their triumph, they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is troublesome even to the prevailing side: None therefore can delight in war, but those that love to fish in troubled waters: *The help from trouble* they pray for, is, preservation from those they were at war with. *Tho' now they were conquerors, yet (so uncertain are the issues of war) unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might go by the worst; therefore, Lord, send us help from the sanctuary*. *Help from trouble*, is rest from war; which they prayed for, as those that contended for equity, not for victory, *sic querimus pacem*.

The hope with which they support themselves in this prayer, has two things in it. (1.) A diffidence of themselves, and all their creature-confidences; *Vain is the help of man*; and then only we are qualified to receive help from God, when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do. (2.) A confidence in God, and in his power and promise, ver. 12. *Through God we shall do valiantly*,

valiantly, and so we shall do victoriously; for he it is, and he only, that shall tread down our enemies, and shall have the praise of it. Note, 1. Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding, that it must encourage and quicken our endeavours in the way of our duty. Though it is God that performeth all things for us, yet there is something to be done by us. 2. Hope in God is the best principle of true courage: Those that do their duty under his conduct, may afford to do it valiantly; for what need they fear, who have God on their side? 3. It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; it is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution. 4. Though we do never so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for *he it is that shall tread down our enemies*, and not we ourselves. All our victories as well as our valour are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crowns must be cast.

P S A L M LXI.

David in this psalm, as in many others, begins with a sad heart, but concludes with an air of pleasantness; begins with prayers and tears, but ends with songs of praise. Thus the soul, by being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself. It should seem David was driven out and banished when he penned this psalm, whether by Saul or Absalom is uncertain: some think by Absalom, because he calls himself the king, ver. 6. but that refers to the king Messiah. David in this psalm resolves to persevere in his duty, encouraged thereto both by experience, and by his expectations. (1.) He will call upon God, because God had protected him, ver. 1—3. (2.) He will call upon God, because God had provided well for him, ver. 4, 5. (3.) He will praise God, because he had an assurance of the continuance of God's favour to him, ver. 6, 7, 8. So that in singing this psalm, we may find that which is very expressive both of our faith and of our hope, of our prayers and of our praises: And some passages in this psalm are very peculiar.

¶ To the chief musician upon Neginah,
A psalm of David.

HEAR my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer. 2. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. 3. For thou hast been a shelter for me: and a strong tower from the enemy. 4. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

In these verses we may observe,

1. David's close adherence and application to God by prayer in the day of his distress and trouble; whatever comes, *I will cry unto thee*, ver. 2. Not to cry to other gods, but to thee only; not fall out with thee because thou afflictest me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee; not speak to thee in a cold and careless manner, but cry to thee with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go, except thou bless me. This he will do (1.) Notwithstanding his distance from the sanctuary, the house of prayer, where he used to attend as in the court of requests. *From the end of the earth*, or of the land, from the most remote and obscure corner of the country, *will I cry unto thee*. Note, Wherever we are, we may have liberty of access to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace, *undique ad caelos tantundem est via*. Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore I will cry unto thee. Note, That which separates us from our other comforts, should drive us so much the nearer to God, the fountain of all comfort. (2.) Notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit; though *my heart is overwhelmed*, it is not so sunk, so burthened, but that it may be lifted up to God in prayer; if it is not capable of being thus raised, it is certainly too much cast down. Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore I will cry unto thee, for by that means it will be supported and relieved. Note, Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. *Is any afflicted? let him pray*, Jam. v. 13. Psal. cii. tit.

2. The particular petition he put up to God when his heart was overwhelmed, and he was ready to sink, *Lead me to the rock that is higher than I*; i. e. (1.) To the rock which is too high for me to get up to, unless thou help me to it; Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety, as

I can never attain to, but by thy special grace working such a faith in me. (2.) To the rock on the top of which I shall be set further out of the reach of my troubles, and nearer the serene and quiet region, than I can be by any power or wisdom of my own. God's power and promise, is a rock that is higher than we: This rock is Christ; they are safe that are in him. We cannot get upon this rock, unless God by his power lead us. *I will put thee in the cleft of the rock*, Exod. xxxiii. 22. We should therefore by faith and prayer put ourselves under a divine conduct, that we may be taken under a divine direction.

3. His desire and expectation of an answer of peace: He begs in faith, ver. 1. *Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer*, i. e. Let me have the present comfort of knowing that I am heard, Psal. xx. 6. and in due let me have that which I pray for.

4. The ground of this expectation, and the plea he useth to enforce his petition, ver. 3. *Thou hast been a shelter for me*, I have found in thee a rock higher than I, therefore I trust thou wilt still lead me to that rock. Note, Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they should encourage us to hope that it will not be in vain. *Thou hast been my strong tower from the enemy*, and thou art as strong as ever, and thy name as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was, Prov. xviii. 10.

5. His resolution to continue in the way of duty to God, and dependence on him, ver. 4. (1.) The service of God shall be his constant work and business: all those must make it so, who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower: none but his menial servants have the benefit of his protection; *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever*. David was now banished from the tabernacle, which was his greatest grievance, but he is assured that God by his providence would bring him back to his tabernacle, because he had by his grace wrought in him such a kindness for the tabernacle, as that he was resolved to make it his perpetual residence, Psal. xxvii. 4. He speaks of abiding in it for ever, because that tabernacle was a type and figure of heaven, Heb. ix. 8, 9, 24. And those that dwell in God's tabernacle as it is a house of duty, during their short ever on earth, shall dwell in that tabernacle which is the house of glory during an endless ever. (2.) The grace of God, and the covenant of grace, shall be his constant comfort; *I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings*, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a shelter to them, ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage they have that abide in God's tabernacle; that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

5. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. 6. Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations. 7. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him. 8. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

In these verses we may observe,

1. With what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly, ver. 5. *Thou, O God, hast heard my vows*, i. e. (1.) The vows themselves which I made, and with which I bound my soul; thou hast taken notice of them; thou hast accepted them because made in sincerity, and been well-pleased with them; thou hast been mindful of them, and put me in mind of them; God put Jacob in mind of his vows, Gen. xxxi. 13.—xxxv. 1. Note, God is a witness to all our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David here, why we should perform our vows, ver. 8. For he that hears the vows we made, will make us hear from them if they be not made good. (2.) The prayers that went along with those vows; those thou hast graciously heard and answered; which encouraged him now to pray, *O God, hear my cry*. He that never did say to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain, will not now begin to say so. Thou hast heard my vows, and given a real answer to them; for *thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name*. Note, (1.) There is a peculiar people in the world that fear God's name, that with a holy awe and reverence accept of, and accommodate themselves to, all the discoveries he is pleased to make of himself to the children of men. (2.) There is a heritage peculiar to that peculiar people, present comforts, earnest of their future bliss. God himself is their inheritance, their portion for ever. The Levites that had God for their inheritance, must take up with him, and not expect a lot like their brethren: so those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain if they have but little of the world. (3.) We need desire no better heritage than that of those which fear God. If God deal

with us as he uses to deal with those that love his name, we need not desire to be any better dealt with.

2. With what assurance he looks forward to the continuance of his life, *ver. 6. Thou shalt prolong the king's life.* This may be understood either (1.) Of himself; if it were penned before he came to the crown, yet being anointed by Samuel, and knowing what God had spoken in his holiness, he could in faith call himself the king, tho' now persecuted as an out-law; or, perhaps, it was penned when Absalom sought to un-king him, and forced him into exile. There were those that aimed to shorten his life, but he trusted to God to prolong his life, which he did to the age of man set by Moses, *viz. seventy years*; which spent in serving his generation according to the will of God, (*Acts xiii. 36.*) might be reckoned as many generations, because many generations would be the better for him. His resolution was to abide in God's tabernacle for ever, *ver. 4. in a way of duty*; and now his hope is, that he shall abide before God for ever in a way of comfort. Those abide to good purpose in this world, that abide before God, *i. e. that serve him, and walk in his fear*; and they that do so, shall abide before him for ever. He speaks of himself in the third person, because the psalm was delivered to the chief musician for the use of the church, and he would have the people in singing of it, to be encouraged with an assurance that notwithstanding the malice of his enemies, their king, as they wished, should live for ever. Or, (2.) Of the Messiah, the king of whom he was a type; it was a comfort to David to think, whatever became of him, the years of the Lord's anointed should be as many generations, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The mediator shall abide before God for ever, for he always appears in the presence of God for us, and ever lives making intercession; and because he lives, we shall live also.

3. With what importunity he begs of God to take him and keep him always under his protection; *O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him.* God's promises, and our faith in them, are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer. David is sure that God will prolong his life, and therefore prays that he would preserve it. Not that he would prepare him a strong life-guard, or a well fortified castle; but that he would prepare mercy and truth for his preservation; *i. e. that God's goodness would provide for his safety according to the promise.* We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth. This may be applied to the Messiah; let him be sent in the fulness of time in performance of the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, *Mic. vii. 20. Luke i. 72, 73.*

4. With what cheerfulness he vows the grateful returns of duty to God, *ver. 8. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever.* Note, God's preserving us calls upon us to praise him; and therefore we should desire to live that we may praise him; *let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.* We must make praising God the work of our time, even to the last, as long as our lives are prolonged, we must continue praising God; and then it shall be made the work of our eternity, and we shall be praising him for ever. That I may daily perform my vows. His praising God was itself the performance of his vows, and it disposed his heart to the performance of his vows in other instances. Note, 1. The vows we have made we must conscientiously perform. 2. Praising God and paying our vows to him, must be our constant daily work; every day we must be doing something towards it, because it is all but little in comparison with what is due, because we daily receive fresh mercies, and because if we think much to do it daily, we cannot expect to be doing it eternally.

P S A L M LXII.

This psalm has nothing in it directly, either of prayer or praise; nor doth it appear upon what occasion it was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion, whether mournful or joyful. But in it, (1.) David with a great deal of pleasure professeth his own confidence in God, and dependence upon him, and encourageth himself to continue waiting on him, ver. 1, 7. (2.) With a great deal of earnestness he excites and encourageth others to trust in God likewise, and not in any creature, ver. 8—12. And in singing it, we should stir up ourselves to wait on God.

¶ To the chief musician, to Jeduthun,
A psalm of David.

1. **T**RULY my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. 2. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. 3. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.

4. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency, they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. 5. My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. 6. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved. 7. In God is my salvation, and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God.

In these verses we have,

1. David's profession of dependence upon God, and upon him only for all good, *ver. 1. Truly my soul waiteth upon God.* Nevertheless, (so some) or however it be, whatever difficulties or dangers I may meet with, tho' God frown upon me, and I meet with discouragements in my attendance on him, yet still my soul waiteth upon God; or, is silent to God, as the word is; faith nothing against what he doth, but quietly expects what he will do. We are in the way both of duty and comfort, when our souls wait upon God; *i. e. when we cheerfully refer our selves, and the disposal of all our affairs, to his will and wisdom, when we acquiesce to and accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence, and patiently expect a doubtful event, with an entire satisfaction in his righteousness and goodness, however it be. Is not my soul subject to God?* So the LXX. So it is, certainly so it ought to be; our wills must be melted into his will. My soul hath respect to God, for from him cometh my salvation. He doubts not but his salvation will come, tho' now he was threatened and in danger; and he expects it to come from God, and from him only; for *in vain is it hoped for from hills and mountains, Jer. iii. 23. Psal. cxxi. 1, 2.* From him I know it will come, and therefore on him will I patiently wait till it doth come, for his time is the best time. We may apply it to our eternal salvation, which is called *the salvation of God, Psal. l. 23.* from him that comes; he prepared it for us, he prepares us for it, and preserves us to it, and therefore let our souls wait on him, to be conducted through this world to that eternal salvation, in such way as he thinks fit.

2. The ground and reason of this dependence, *ver. 2. He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence.* (1.) He hath been so many a time, in him I have found shelter, and strength, and succour; he hath by his grace supported me, and born me up under my troubles, and by his providence defended me from the insults of my enemies, and delivered me out of the troubles into which I was plunged; and therefore *I trust he will deliver me, 2 Cor. i. 10.* (2.) He only can be my rock and my salvation; creatures are insufficient, they are nothing without him, and therefore I will look above them to him. (3.) He hath by covenant undertaken to be so. Even he that is the Rock of ages is my rock, that is the God of salvation, is my salvation; that is the most High, is my high place; and therefore I have all the reason in the world to confide in him.

3. The improvement he makes of his confidence in God.

1. Trusting in God his heart is fixed. If God is my strength and mighty deliverer, *I shall not be greatly moved, i. e. I shall not be undone and ruined; I may be shocked, but I shall not be sunk.* Or, I shall not be much disturbed and disquieted in my own breast. I may be put into some fright, but I shall not be afraid with any amazement, nor so as to be put out of the possession of my own soul. I may be perplexed, but not in despair, *2 Cor. iv. 8.* This hope in God will be an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast.

2. His enemies are slighted, and all their attempts against him looked upon with contempt, *ver. 3, 4.* If God be for us, we need not fear what man can do against us, tho' never so mighty and malicious. He here, (1.) Gives a character of his enemies. They imagine mischief, design it with a great deal of the serpent's venom, and contrive it with a great deal of the serpent's subtilty, and this against a man, one of their own kind, against one single man, that is not an unequal match for them, for they are many, they continued their malicious prosecution, tho' providence had oft defeated their mischievous designs? How long will ye do it? Will ye never be convinced of your error? Will your malice never have spent itself? They are unanimous in their consultations to cast an excellent man down from his excellency, to draw an honest man from his integrity, to entangle him in sin, which is the only thing that can effectually cast us down from our excellency; to thrust a man, whom God has exalted, down from his dignity, and so to fight against God. Envy was at the bottom of their malice; they were grieved at David's advancement, and therefore plotted by diminishing his character, and blackening that, which was casting him down from his excellency, to balk his preferment. In order to this, they bely him, and love to hear such ill characters given of him, and such ill reports raised and spread concerning him, as they themselves know to be false; they delight in lies. And as they make no conscience of lying concerning him to do him a mischief; so they make no conscience of lying to him, to conceal the mischief they design, and accomplish it the more effectually, they bless with their mouth, they compliment David to his face,

face, but they curse inwardly, *i. e.* in their hearts they wish him all mischief, and privately they are plotting against him, and in their cabals carrying on some ill design or other, by which they hope to ruin him; it is dangerous putting our trust in men who are thus false, but God is faithful. (2.) He reads their doom, pronounceth a sentence of death upon them, not as a king, but as a prophet, *ye shall be slain all of you*, by the righteous judgments of God: Saul and his servants were slain by the Philistines on mount Gilboa, according to this prediction; whoever seeks the ruin of God's chosen, are but preparing ruin for themselves. God's church is built upon a rock which will stand, but they that fight against it, and its patrons, and protectors, shall be as a bowing wall, and a tottering fence, which, having a rotten foundation, sinks with its own weight, falls of a sudden, and buries those in the ruins of it that put themselves under the shadow and shelter of it. David having put his confidence in God, thus foresees the overthrow of his enemies, and in effect sets them at defiance, and bids them do their worst.

3. He is himself encouraged to continue waiting upon God, *ver. 5, 6, 7. My soul, wait thou only upon God.* Note, The good we do we should stir up ourselves to continue doing, and to do yet more and more, as those that have through grace experienced the comfort and benefit of it. We have found it good to wait upon God, and therefore should charge our souls, and even charm them into such a constant dependence upon him, as may make us always easy. He had said, *ver. 1. From him cometh my salvation*; he saith, *ver. 5. My expectation is from him.* His salvation was the principal matter of his expectation; let him have that from God, and he expects no more. His salvation being from God, all his other expectations are from him: If God will save my soul, as to every thing else let him do what he pleaseth with me, and I will acquiesce in his disposals, knowing they shall all turn to my salvation, *Phil. i. 19.* He repeats, *ver. 6.* what he had said concerning God, *ver. 2.* as one that was not only assured of it, but greatly well pleased with it, and dwelt much upon it in his thoughts. *He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence*, I know he is; but there he adds, *I shall not be greatly moved*, here I shall not be moved at all. Note, Faith grows by being exercised, and the more it is acted, the more active it is, *crefcit eundo.* The more we meditate upon God's attributes and promises, and our own experience, the more ground we get of our fears, which, like Haman, when they begin to fall, shall fall before us, and we shall be kept in perfect peace, *Isa. xxvi. 3.* And as David's faith in God advanceth to an unshaken staydness, so his joy in God improves itself into an holy triumph, *ver. 7. In God is my salvation and my glory.* Where our salvation is, there our glory is; for what is our salvation, but the glory to be revealed; the eternal weight of glory? and there our glorifying must be: In God let us boast all the day long. The rock of my strength, *i. e.* my strong rock, on which I build my hopes, and stay my self, and my refuge to which I flee for shelter, when I am pursued, is in God, and in him only. I have no other to flee to, no other to trust to, the more I think of it, the better satisfied I am in the choice I have made. Thus doth he delight himself in the Lord, and then ride upon the high places of the earth, *Isa. lviii. 14.*

8. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.
9. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. 10. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. 11. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. 12. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou rendrest to every man according to his work.

Here we have David's exhortation to others to trust in God, and wait upon him as he had done: Those that have found the comfort of the ways of God themselves, will invite others into those ways; there is enough in God for all the saints to draw from, and we shall have never the less for others sharing with us.

1. He counsels all to wait upon God, as he did, *ver. 8.* Observe, (1.) To whom he gives this good counsel, *Ye people, i. e.* All people; all shall be welcome to trust in God, for he is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, *Psal. lxxv. 5.* ye people of the house of Israel, so the Chaldee: They are especially engaged and invited to trust in God, for he is the God of Israel, and should not a people seek unto their God! (2.) What the good counsel is which he gives. 1. To confide in God; trust in him; deal with him, and be willing to deal upon trust; depend upon him to perform all things for you, upon his wisdom and goodness, his power and promise, his providence and grace. Do this at all times, *i. e.* We must have an habitual confidence in God always, must live a life of dependence upon him; must so trust

in him at all times, as not at any time to put that confidence in ourselves, or in any creature, which is to be put in him only: And we must have an actual confidence in God upon all occasions; trust in him upon every emergency, to guide us when we are in doubt; to protect us when we are in danger; to supply us when we are in want; to strengthen us for every good word and work. 2. To converse with God, *pour out your heart before him*; the expression seems to allude to the pouring out of the drink-offerings before the Lord. When we make a penitent confession of sin, our hearts are therein poured out before God, *1 Sam. vii. 31.* But here it is meant of prayer, which if it be as it should be, is the pouring out of the heart before God. We must lay our grievances before him, offer up our desires to him, with all humble freedom, and then entirely refer ourselves to his disposal, patiently submitting our wills to his: This is pouring out our hearts. (3.) What encouragement he gives us to take this good counsel. *God is a refuge for us*; not only my refuge, *ver. 7.* but a refuge for us all, even as many as will flee to him, and take shelter in him.

2. He cautions us to take heed of misplacing our confidence, in which as much as in any thing *the heart is deceitful*, *Jer. xvii. 5—9.* They that trust in God truly, *ver. 1.* will trust in him only, *ver. 5.*

(1.) Let us not trust in the men of this world, for they are broken reeds, *ver. 9. Surely men of low degree are vanity*, utterly unable to help us, and *men of high degree are a lie*, that will deceive us if we trust to them. Men of low degree, one would think, might be relied on for their multitude and number, their bodily strength and service; and men of high degree for their wisdom, power, and influence; but they are neither to be depended on; nay, of the two, men of high degree are under the worse character; for they are a lie, which notes not only vanity, but iniquity. We are not so apt to depend upon men of low degree, as upon the king and the captain of the host, who by the figure they make, tempt us to trust in them, and so when they fail us prove a lie. But lay them in the balance, the balance of the scripture, or rather make trial of them, see how they will prove, whether they will answer your expectations from them or no, and you will write Tekel upon them, they are alike lighter than vanity; there is no depending upon their wisdom to advise us, their power to act for us; upon their good will to us, no, nor upon their promises in comparison with God, nor otherwise than in subordination to him.

(2.) Let us not trust in the wealth of this world, let not that be made our strong city, *ver. 10. Trust not in oppression, i. e.* not in riches got by fraud and violence; because where there is a great deal, it is commonly got by indirect scraping or saving; our Saviour calls it the *mammon of unrighteousness*, *Luke xvi. 9.* or, not in the arts of getting riches. Think not that either because you have got abundance, or are in the way of getting, that therefore you are safe enough; for this is becoming vain in robbery, *i. e.* cheating your selves while you think to cheat others. He that trusted in the abundance of his riches, strengthened himself in his wickedness, *Psal. lii. 7.* But at his end he will be a fool, *Jer. xvii. 11.* Let none be so stupid as to think of supporting themselves in their sin, much less of supporting themselves in this sin. Nay, because it is hard to have riches, and not to trust in them, if they increase, tho' by lawful and honest means; we must take heed, lest we let out our affections inordinately towards them, *set not your heart upon them, i. e.* be not eager for them, do not take a complacency in them as the rest of your souls, nor put a confidence in them as your portion; be not over-sollicitous about them, do not value your selves and others by them; make not the wealth of the world your chief good and highest end; in short, do not make an idol of it. This we are most in danger of doing when they increase; when the grounds of the rich man brought forth plentifully, then he said to his soul, *Take thine ease* in these things, *Luke xii. 19.* It is a smiling world that is most likely to draw the heart away from God, on whom only it should be set.

3. He gives a very good reason why we should make God our confidence, because he is a God of infinite power, mercy, and righteousness, *ver. 11, 12.* This he himself was well assured of, and would have us be assured of it. *God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, i. e.* (1.) God hath spoken it, and I have heard it, once, yea twice. He hath spoken it, and I have heard it by the light of reason, which easily infers it from the nature of the infinitely perfect Being, and from his works both of creation and providence. He has spoken it and I have heard once, yea twice, that is, many a time, by the events that have been concerning me in particular: And by the light of revelation, by dreams and visions, *Job iv. 15.* by the glorious manifestation of himself upon mount Sinai, to which some think it doth especially refer, and by the written word. God has often told us what a great and good God he is, and we ought as often to take notice of what he has told us. Or (2.) Tho' God spoke it but once, I heard it twice; heard it diligently, not only with my outward ears, but with my soul and mind. To some God speaks twice, and they will not hear once; but to others he speaks but once, and they hear twice. Compare *Job xxxiii. 14.* Now

Now what is it which is thus spoken and thus heard?

1. That the God with whom we have to do is infinite in power. Power belongs to God; he is almighty, and can do every thing; with him nothing is impossible: All the powers of all the creatures are derived from him, and depend upon him, and are used by him as he pleaseth. His is the power, and to him we must ascribe it. This is a good reason why we should trust in him at all times, and live in a constant dependence upon him; for he is able to do all that for us which we trust in him for.

2. That he is a God of infinite goodness; here he turns his speech to God himself, as being desirous to give him the glory of his goodness, which is his glory: *Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.* God is not only the greatest, but the best of beings. Mercy is with him, *Psal. cxxx. 4, 7.* He is merciful, in a way peculiar to himself, he is the *Father of mercies*, 2 Cor. i. 3. This is a further reason why we should trust in him, and answers the objections of our sinfulness and unworthiness; tho' we deserve nothing but his wrath, yet we may hope for all good from his mercy, which is over all his works.

3. That he never did, nor never will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; *For thou renderest to every man according to his work.* Tho' he doth not always do this visibly in this world, yet he will do it in the day of recompence. No service done him shall go unrewarded, nor any affront given him unpunished, unless it be repented of. By this it appears that power and mercy belong to him: If he were not a God of power, there are sinners that would be too big to be punished: And if he were not a God of mercy, there are services that would be too worthless to be rewarded. This seems especially to speak the justice of God in judging upon appeals made to him by wronged innocency; he will be sure to judge according to truth, in righting the injured, and revenging them on those that have been injurious to them, 1 Kings viii. 32. Let those therefore that are wronged commit their cause to him, and trust to him to plead it.

P S A L M LXIII.

This psalm has in it as much of warmth and lively devotion, as any of David's psalms, in so little a compass. As the sweetest of Paul's epistles, were those that bore date out of a prison; so some of the sweetest of David's psalms, were those that were penned as this was in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment, was, the want of publick ordinances; these he here longs to be restored to the enjoyment of; and the present want did but whet his appetite. Yet it is not the ordinances, but the God of the ordinances, that his heart is upon. And here we have, (1.) His desire towards God, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His esteem of God, ver. 3, 4. (3.) His satisfaction in God, ver. 5. (4.) His secret communion with God, ver. 6. (5.) His joyful dependence upon God, ver. 7, 8. (6.) His holy triumph in God, over his enemies, and in the assurance of his own safety, ver. 9, 10, 11. A devout and pious soul has little need of direction how to sing this psalm, so naturally doth it speak its own genuine language; and an un sanctified soul, that is unacquainted and unaffected with divine things, is scarce capable of singing it with understanding.

¶ A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

1. **O** GOD, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: 2. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

The title tells us, when the psalm was penned, when David was in the wilderness of Judah; that is, in the forest of Hareth, 1 Sam. xxii. 5. Or, in the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Sam. xxiii. 15. (1.) Even in Canaan, tho' a fruitful land, and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses, places less fruitful, and less inhabited than other places. It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven: There it is all city, all paradise, and no desert-ground: *The wilderness there shall blossom as the rose.* (2.) The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in a wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting, wandring, and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves. (3.) All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then, it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank

God it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.

David in these verses *stirs up himself to take hold on God.*

1. By a lively active faith, *O God, thou art my God.* Note, In all our addresses to God we must eye him as God and our God, and this will be our comfort in a wilderness state. We must acknowledge that God is, that we speak to one that really exists, and is present with us when we say, *O God*, which is a serious word, pity it should ever be used as a by-word: And we must own his authority over us, and propriety in us, and our relation to him, *Thou art my God*, mine by creation, and therefore my rightful owner and ruler, mine by covenant and my own consent. We must speak it with the greatest pleasure to ourselves, and thankfulness to God, as those that are resolved to abide by it, *O God, thou art my God.*

2. By pious and devout affections, pursuant to the choice he had made of God, and the covenant he had made with him.

1. He resolves to seek God, and his favour and grace. *Thou art my God, and therefore I will seek thee, for should not a people seek unto their God?* Isa. viii. 20. We must seek him, i. e. we must covet his favour as our chief good, and consult his glory as our highest end; we must seek acquaintance with him by his word, and seek mercy from him by prayer. We must seek him, (1.) Early, i. e. with the utmost care, as those that are afraid of missing him; we must begin our days with him, begin every day with him; *early will I seek thee.* (2.) Earnestly; my soul thirsteth for thee, and my flesh longeth for thee, i. e. my whole man is affected with this pursuit, here in a dry and thirsty land. Observe, (1.) His complaint in the want of God's favourable presence. He was in a dry and thirsty land; so he reckoned it, not so much because it was a wilderness, as because it was at a distance from the ark, from the word and sacraments. This world is a weary land, so the word is; it is so to the worldly, that have their portion in it, it will yield them no true satisfaction: it is so to the godly, that have their passage through it, it is a valley of Baca, they can promise themselves little from it. (2.) His importunity for that presence of God, my soul thirsteth, longeth for thee. His want quickened his desires, which were very intense, he thirsted as the hunted hart for the water-brooks, he would take up with nothing short of it. And they were very impatient, he longed, he languished, till he should be restored to the liberty of God's ordinances. Note, Gracious souls look down upon the world with a holy disdain, and look up to God with a holy desire.

2. He longs to enjoy God; What is it he doth so passionately wish for? What is his petition, and what is his request? it is this, ver. 2. *To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* That is, (1.) To see it here in this wilderness, as I have seen it in the tabernacle, to see it in secret, as I have seen it in the solemn assembly. Note, When we want the benefit of publick ordinances, we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements, that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary. Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone, we may have the Father with us, and that is enough. (2.) To see it again in the sanctuary, as I have formerly seen it there. He longs to be brought out of this wilderness, not that he might see his friends again, and be restored to the pleasures and gaieties of the court, but that he might have access to the sanctuary, not to see the priests there, and the ceremony of the worship, but to see thy power and glory, i. e. thy glorious power, or thy powerful glory, which is put for all God's attributes and perfections; that I may increase in my acquaintance with them, and have the agreeable impressions of them made upon my heart. So to behold the glory of the Lord, as to be changed into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. That I may see thy power and glory. He doth not say, as I have seen them, but as I have seen thee. We cannot see the essence of God, but we see him, in seeing by faith his attributes and perfections. These sights David here pleaseth himself with the remembrance of; those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God, he loved to think them over again: These he lamented the loss of, and longed to be restored to. Note, That which has been the delight, and is the desire of gracious souls in their attendance on solemn ordinances, is to see God and his power and glory in them.

3. Because thy loving kindness is better than life: my lips shall praise thee. 4. Thus I will bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 5. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: 6. When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.

How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praises and thanksgivings! after two verses that speak his desire in

in seeking God, here are some that speak his joy and satisfaction in having found him. Faithful prayers, may presently be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault. *Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord*, Psal. cv. 3. and let them praise him for working those desires in them, and giving them assurance that he will satisfy them. David was now in a wilderness, and yet had his heart much enlarged in blessing God. Even in affliction we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. Observe,

1. What David will praise God for, *ver. 3. Because thy loving kindness is better than life*, than lives; life and all the comforts of life; life in its best estate; long life and prosperity. God's loving kindness is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, *Psal. xxx. 5.* It is better a thousand times to die in God's favour, than to live under his wrath. David in the wilderness finds by comfortable experience, that God's loving-kindness is better than life; and therefore, saith he, my lips shall praise thee. Note, Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour, ought to have them enlarged in his praises. A great deal of reason we have to bless God we have better provisions, and better possessions, than the wealth of this world can afford us. And that in the service of God, and in communion with him, we have better employments, and better enjoyments than we can have in the business and converse of this world.

2. How he will praise God, and how long, *ver. 4.* He resolves to live a life of thankfulness to God, and dependence on him. Observe, (1.) His manner of blessing God; *Thus will I bless thee*: Thus, as I have now begun; the present devout affections shall not pass away like the morning cloud, but shine more and more like the morning sun. Or thus, *i. e.* I will bless thee with the same earnestness and fervency with which I have prayed to thee. (2.) His continuance and perseverance therein; *I will bless thee while I live*. Note, Praising God, must be the work of our whole lives; we must always retain a grateful sense of his former favours, and repeat our thanksgivings for them; we must every day give thanks to him for the benefits with which we are daily loaded. We must in every thing give thanks; and not be put out of frame for this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time. Whatever days we live to see, how dark and cloudy soever, tho' the days come of which we say, *we have no pleasure in them*; yet still every day must be a thanksgiving-day, even to our dying-day. In this work, we must spend our time, because in this work we hope to spend a blessed eternity. (3.) His constant regard to God upon all occasions, which should accompany his praises of him; *I will lift up my hands in thy name*. We must have an eye to God's name, *i. e.* to all that by which he has made himself known, in all our prayers and praises, which we are taught to begin with, *Hallowed be thy name*, and to conclude with, *Thine is the glory*. This we must have an eye to in our work and warfare; we must lift up our hands to our duty, and against our spiritual enemies in God's name, *i. e.* in the strength of his Spirit and grace, *Psal. lxxi. 16. Zech. x. ult.* We must make all our vows in God's name, to him we must engage ourselves, and in a dependence upon his grace: And when we lift up the hands that hang down, in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name, from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted: *In thee do we boast all the day long*.

3. With what pleasure and delight he would praise God, *ver. 5.* (1.) With inward complacency; *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness*: Not only as with bread, which is nourishing, but as with marrow, which is pleasant and delicious, *Isa. xxv. 6.* David hopes he shall return again to the enjoyment of God's ordinances, and then he shall thus be satisfied, and the more for his having been for a time under restraint. Or, if not, yet in God's loving-kindness, and in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied. Note, There is that in a gracious God, and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a soul, *Psal. xxxvi. 8.*—*lxxv. 4.* And there is that in a gracious soul, which takes abundant satisfaction in God, and communion with him. The saints have a contentment with God, they desire no more than his favour to make them happy; and they have a transcendent complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are senseless and without relish; as puddle-water in comparison with the wine of this consolation. (2.) With outward expressions of this satisfaction; he will praise God with joyful lips. He will praise him, (1.) Openly; his mouth and lips shall praise God. When with the heart man believeth, and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both, to the glory of God; not that the performances of the mouth are accepted without the heart, *Matt. xv. 8.* But out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak, *Psal. xlv. 1.* both for the exciting of our own devout affections, and for the edification of others. (2.) Cheerfully; We must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to that and other duties of religion, with great cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

No. xlii.

4. How he would entertain himself with thoughts of God, when he was most retired, *ver. 6.* I will praise thee, *when I remember thee upon my bed*. We must praise God upon every remembrance of him. Now David was shut out from public ordinances, he abounded the more in secret communion with God, and so did something towards making up his loss. Observe here, (1.) How David employed himself in thinking of God. God was in all his thoughts, which is the reverse of the wicked man's character, *Psal. x. 4.* The thoughts of God were ready to him; I remember thee, *i. e.* when I go to think, I find thee at my right hand present to my mind. This subject should first offer itself, as that which we cannot forget or overlook. And they were fixed in him; *I meditate on thee*. Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind.

(2.) When David employed himself thus; *Upon his bed*, and in the night-watches. David was now wandering and unsettled, but wherever he came, he brought his religion along with him. Upon my beds (so some). Being hunted by Saul, he seldom lay two nights together in the same bed; but wherever he lay, if, as Jacob, upon the cold ground, and with a stone for his pillow, yet good thoughts of God lay down with him. David was so full of business all day, shifting for his own safety, that he had scarce leisure to apply himself solemnly to religious exercises, and therefore rather than want time for them, he denied himself his necessary sleep. He was now in continual peril of his life, so that we may suppose care and fear many a time held his eyes waking, and gave him wearisome nights; but then he entertained and comforted himself with thoughts of God. Sometimes we find David in tears upon his bed, *Psal. vi. 6.* but thus he wiped away his tears. When sleep departeth from our eyes through pain or sickness of body, or any disturbance in the mind, our souls by remembering God may be at ease and repose themselves. Perhaps, an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done, see *Psal. xvi. 7.*—*xvii. 3.*—*iv. 4.*—*cxix. 62.* There were night-watches kept in the tabernacle for praising God, *Psal. cxxxiv. 1.* which, it is probable, David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites in: but now he could not keep place with them, he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.

7. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. 8. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. 9. But those that seek my soul to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. 10. They shall fall by the sword, they shall be a portion for foxes. 11. But the king shall rejoice in God, every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speaketh lies shall be stopped.

David having expressed his desires towards God, and his praises of him, here speaks his confidence in him, and his joyful expectations from him, *ver. 7.* *In the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice*; alluding either to the wings of the cherubims stretched out over the ark of the covenant, between which God is said to dwell.—I will rejoice in thine oracles, and in covenant and communion with thee; or, to the wings of a fowl, under which the helpless young ones have shelter, as the eagles young ones, *Exod. xix. 4.* *Deut. xxxii. 11.* which speaks the divine power; and the young ones of the common hen, *Matt. xxiii. 37.* which speaks more of divine tenderness: It is a phrase often used in the psalms, *Psal. xvii. 8.*—*xxxvi. 7.*—*lvii. 1.*—*lxi. 4.*—*xc. 4.* and no where else in this sense, except *Ruth ii. 12.* where Ruth when she became a proselyte, is said to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*. It is our duty to rejoice in the shadow of God's wings, which notes our recourse to him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens when they are cold or frightened run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It intimates also our reliance upon him as able and ready to help us, and our refreshment and satisfaction in his care and protection. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil.

Now let us see further,

1. What were the supports and encouragements of David's confidence in God. Two things were as props to that hope, which the word of God was the only foundation of.

(1.) His former experiences of God's power in relieving him; *because thou hast been my help*, when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore I will still rejoice in thy salvation, will trust in thee for the future, and will do it with delight and holy joy; Thou hast been not only my helper, but my help, for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us, but by him. Here we may set up our Ebenezer, saying, *hitherto the Lord has helped us*, and must therefore resolve that we will never desert them, never distrust him, nor ever droop in our walking with him.

(2.) The present sense he had of God's grace-carrying him on in these pursuits, *ver. 8. My soul follows hard after thee*, which speaks a very earnest desire, and a serious, vigorous endeavour to keep up communion with God; if we cannot always have God in our embraces; yet we must always have him in our eye, reaching forth towards him as our prize, *Phil. iii. 14.* To press hard after God, is to follow him close, as those that are afraid of losing the sight of him, and to follow him fast, as those that long to be with him. This David did, and he owns to the glory of God, *thy right hand upholds me.* God upholds him, (1.) Under his afflictions, that he might not sink under them; *underneath are the everlasting arms.* (2.) In his devotions; God upheld him in his holy desires, and pursuits, that he might not grow weary in well-doing. Those that follow hard after God, would soon fail and give off, if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us in the pursuit of him, quickens our good affections, and comforts us while we have not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of. It is by the power of God, that is his right hand, that we are kept from falling. Now this was a great encouragement to the psalmist to hope, that he would in due time give him that which he so earnestly desired, because he had by his grace wrought in him those desires, and kept them up.

2. What it was that David triumphed in the hopes of.

1. That his enemies should be ruined, *ver. 9, 10.* There were those that *sought his soul to destroy it*, not only his life, which they struck at, both to prevent his coming to the crown, and because they envied and hated him for his wisdom, piety, and usefulness; but his soul, they sought to destroy that by banishing him from God's ordinances, which are the nourishment and support of the soul; and so doing what they could to starve it, and by sending him to serve other gods, and so doing what they could to poison it, *1 Sam. xxvi. 19.* But he foresees and foretels, (1.) That they shall go into the lower parts of the earth; to the grave; to hell; their enmity to David would be their death, and their damnation; their ruin, their eternal ruin. (2.) That they shall fall by the sword; by the sword of God's wrath and his justice; by the sword of man, *Job xix. 28, 29.* They shall die a violent death, *Rev. xiii. 10.* This was fulfilled in Saul, he fell by the sword, his own sword; David foretold this, yet he would not execute it when it was in the power of his hand, once and again, for precepts not prophecies are our rule. (3.) That they shall be a portion for foxes; either their dead bodies shall be a prey to ravenous beasts; Saul lay a good while unburied; or their houses and estates shall be a habitation for wild beasts, *Isa. xxxiv. 14.* Such as this will be the doom of Christ's enemies, that oppose his kingdom and interest in the world; *bring them forth and slay them before me*, *Luke xix. 27.*

2. That he himself should gain his point at last, *ver. 11.* That he should be advanced to the throne to which he had been anointed; *The king shall rejoice in God.* (1.) He calls himself the king, because he knew himself to be so in the divine purpose and designation; thus Paul, while yet in the conflict, writes himself *more than a conqueror*, *Rom. viii. 37.* Believers are made kings, tho' they are not to have the dominion till the morning of the resurrection. (2.) He doubts not but that tho' he was now sowing in tears, yet he should reap in joy. *The king shall rejoice.* (3.) He resolves to make God the alpha and omega of all his joys; he shall rejoice in God. Now this is applicable to the glories and joys of the exalted Redeemer. Messiah the prince shall rejoice in God; he is already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be compleated at his second coming.

Two things would be the good effect of his advancement.

1. It would be the consolation of his friends. Every one that swears to him, *i. e.* to David, that comes into his interest, and takes an oath of allegiance to him, shall glory in his success: or, that swears by him, *i. e.* by the blessed name of God, and not by any idol, *Deut. vi. 13.* And then it means all good people, that make a sincere and open profession of God's name: They shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement; *They that fear thee will be glad when they see me.* They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in its victory at last. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.*

2. It would be the confutation of his enemies. *The mouth of them that speak lies*, of Saul and Doeg, and others that misrepresented David, and insulted over him as if his cause was desperate, shall be quite stopped; they shall not have one word more to say against him, but will be for ever silenced and shamed. Apply this to Christ's enemies; those that speak lies to him, as all hypocrites do, that tell him they love him, but their hearts are not with him; their mouth shall be stopped with that word, *I know you not whence you are*, they shall be for ever speechless, *Matt. xxii. 12.* Those that speak lies against him, who *pervert the right ways of the Lord*, and speak ill of his holy religion, their mouths will be stopped too, in that day when the Lord shall come to reckon for all the hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Christ's second coming will be the everlasting triumph of all his faithful friends and followers, who may therefore now triumph in the believing hopes of it.

P S A L M LXIV.

The whole psalm has reference to David's enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; many such there were, and a great deal of trouble they gave him, almost all his days, so that we need not guess at any particular occasion of penning this psalm. (1.) He prays to God to preserve him from their malicious designs against him, ver. 1, 2. (2.) He gives a very ill character of them, as men marked for ruin by their own wickedness, ver. 3—6. (3.) By the spirit of prophecy he foretels their destruction, which would redound to the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people, ver. 7—10. In singing this psalm we must observe the effect of the old enmity that is in the seed of the woman, against the seed of the serpent; and assure ourselves that the serpent's head will be broken at last to the honour and joy of the holy seed.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **H**E A R my voice, O God, in my prayer; preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
2. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:
3. Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words:
4. That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
5. They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily, they say, Who shall see them?
6. They search out iniquities, they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart is deep.

David in these verses puts in before God a representation of his own danger, and of his enemies character, to enforce his petition that God would protect him, and punish them.

1. He earnestly begs of God to preserve him, *ver. 1, 2. Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer*, *i. e.* grant me the thing I pray for: And this is it, *Lord, preserve my life from fear of the enemy, i. e.* from the enemy that I am in fear of. He makes request for his life, which is in a particular manner dear to him, because he knows it is designed to be very serviceable to God, and his generation. When his life is struck at, it cannot be thought he should altogether hold his peace, allude to *Esth. vii. 2, 4.* And if he plead his fear of the enemy, it is no disparagement to his courage; his father Jacob, that prince with God, did so before him, *Gen. xxxii. 11. Deliver me from the hand of Esau, for I fear him: Preserve my life from fear*, *i. e.* not only from the thing itself which I fear, but from the disquieting fear of it; and this is in effect the preservation of the life, for fear has torment, particularly the fear of death, by reason of which some are all their life-time subject to bondage. He prays, *hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked*, *i. e.* from the mischief which they secretly consult among themselves to do against me, and *from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity*, who join forces as they join counsels to do me a mischief. Observe, The secret counsel ends in an insurrection; treasonable practices begin in treasonable confederacies and conspiracies. Hide me from them, that they may not find me, that they may not reach me. Let me be safe under thy protection.

2. He complains of the great malice and wickedness of his enemies. *Lord, hide me from them*, for they are the worst of men, not fit to be connived at; they are dangerous men, that will stick at nothing, so that I am undone, if thou do not take my part.

1. They are very spiteful in their calumnies and reproaches; *ver. 3, 4.* They are described as military men, with their sword and bow, archers that take aim exactly, secretly and suddenly shoot at the harmless bird, that apprehends not herself in any danger. But, (1.) Their tongues are their swords, flaming swords, two-edged swords, drawn swords drawn in anger, with which they cut and wound, and kill the good name of their neighbour. The tongue is a little member, but, like the sword, it *doeth great things*, *Jam. iii. 5.* It is a dangerous weapon. (2.) Bitter words are their arrows. Scurrilous reflections, opprobrious nicknames, false representations, slanders and calumnies, the fiery darts of the wicked one, set on fire of hell. For these their malice bends their bows, to send out these arrows with so much the more force. (3.) The upright man is their mark, against him their spleen is, and they cannot speak peaceably either of him or to him. The better any man is, the more he is envied by those that are themselves bad, and the more ill is said of him. (4.) They manage it with a great deal of art and subtilty; they shoot in *secret*, that those they shoot at may not discover

discover them and avoid the danger, for *in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird*. And suddenly do they shoot, without giving a man lawful warning, or any opportunity to defend himself. *Cursed be he that thus smiteth his neighbour secretly*, in his self. *Deut. xxvii. 24.* There is no guard against a pass reputation, *Deut. xxvii. 24.* (5.) Herein they fear not, *i. e.* they are confident of their success, and doubt not but by these methods they shall gain the point which their malice aims at. Or rather they fear not the wrath of God which will be the portion of a false tongue. They are impudent and daring in the mischief they do to good people, as if they must never be called to an account for it.

2. They are very close, and very resolute in their malicious projects, *ver. 5.* (1.) They strengthen and corroborate themselves and one another in this evil matter, and by joining together in it, they make one another the more bitter and the more bold, *fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhaerebit*. It is bad to do an ill thing, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in it, that is doing the devil's work for him. It is a sign the heart is hardened to the highest degree, when it is thus fully set to do evil, and fears no colours. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but when that is baffled, the case is desperate. (2.) They consult with themselves and one another how to do the most mischief, and most effectually; *they commune of laying snares privily*. All their communion is in sin, and all their communication is how to sin securely. They hold councils of war for finding out the most effectual expedient to do mischief, every snare they lay was talked of before, and was laid with all the contrivance of their wicked wits combined. (3.) They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God himself takes no notice of their wicked practices; *they say, who shall see them?* A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked.

3. They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution, *ver. 6.* *They search out iniquity*, *i. e.* they take a great deal of pains to find out some iniquity or other to lay to my charge, they dig deep, and look far back, and put things to the utmost stretch, that they may have something to accuse me of; or, they are industrious to find out new arts of doing mischief to me; in this they accomplish a diligent search; they go thro' with it, and spare neither cost nor labour; *evil men dig up mischief*. Half the pains that many take to damn their souls would serve to save them. They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction, for *the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart is deep; deep as hell, desperately wicked, who can know it?* By the unaccountable wickedness of their wit, and of their will, they shew themselves to be both in subtilty and malignity, the genuine offspring of the old serpent.

7. But God shall shoot at them *with an arrow*, suddenly shall they be wounded. 8. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them, shall flee away. 9. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing. 10. The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

We may observe here,

1. The judgments of God which should certainly come upon these malicious persecutors of David. Tho' they encouraged themselves in their wickedness, here is that, which if they would believe and consider it, was enough to discourage them. And it is observable how the punishment answers the sin. (1.) They shoot at David secretly and suddenly to wound him, but God shall shoot at them, for he *ordains his arrows against his persecutors*, *Pfal. vii. 13.* *Against the face of them*, *Pfal. xxi. 12.* And God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and pierce deeper than theirs do or can. They have many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind; the curse causeless shall not come; but God has one arrow that will be their death, his curse which is never causeless, and therefore shall come, with it they shall be suddenly wounded, *i. e.* their wound by it will be a surprize upon them, because they were secure, and not apprehensive of any danger. (2.) Their tongues fell upon him, but God shall *make their own tongues to fall upon themselves*: They do it by the desert of their sin, God doth it by the justice of his wrath, *ver. 8.* When God deals with men according to the desert of their tongue-sins, and brings those mischiefs upon them which they have passionately and maliciously imprecated upon others, then he makes their own tongues to fall upon them; and it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell, like a talent of lead. Many have cut their own throats, and many more have damned their own souls with their tongues, and it will be an aggravation of their condemnation, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self; art snared in the words of thy mouth. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* They that love cursing, it shall come unto them. Sometimes

mens secret wickedness is brought to light by their own confession; and then their own tongue falls upon themselves.

2. The influence which these judgments should have upon others; for it is done *in the open sight of all*, *Job xxxiv. 26.*

1. Their neighbours shall shun them, and shift for their own safety; they shall flee away, for fear of partaking in their plagues, and being involved in their ruin; so dreadful will it be, and such a noise will it make in the country; they shall flee away, as the men of Israel did from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, *Numb. xvi. 27.* Some think this was fulfilled in the death of Saul, when not only his army was dispersed, but the inhabitants of the neighbouring country were so terrified with the fall, not only of their king, but of his three sons, that they quitted their cities and fled, *1 Sam. xxxi. 7.*

2. Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, *ver. 9.* (1.) They shall understand and observe God's hand in all; and unless we do so we are not likely to profit by the dispensations of providence, *Hos. xiv. 9.* *They shall wisely consider his doing.* There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to take the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it. God's doing, is well worth our considering, *Eccl. vii. 13.* but it must be considered wisely, that we put not a corrupt gloss upon a pure text. (2.) They shall be affected with a holy awe of God upon the consideration of it. All men (all that have any thing of the reason of a man in them) shall fear and tremble, because of God's judgments, *Pfal. cxix. 120.* They shall fear to do the like, fear being found persecutors of God's people; *smite the scorner, and the simple shall beware.* (3.) They shall declare the work of God; they shall speak to one another; and to all about them of the justice of God in punishing persecutors; what we wisely consider our selves, we should wisely declare to others; for their edification and the glory of God: *This is the finger of God.*

3. Good people shall in a special manner take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, *ver. 10.* (1.) It shall increase their joy, *The righteous shall be glad in the Lord*; not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocence pleaded effectually. 2. It shall encourage their faith, they shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty, and be willing to venture for him with an entire confidence in him. 3. Their joy and faith shall both express themselves in a holy boasting. *All the upright in heart that keep a good conscience, and approve themselves to God shall glory, not in themselves, but in the favour of God, in his righteousness and goodness, their relation to him, and interest in him; let him that glories glory in the Lord.*

P S A L M LXV.

In this psalm we are directed to give to God the glory of his power and goodness, which appears (1.) In the kingdom of grace, *ver. 1.* *Hearing prayer*, *ver. 2.* *Pardoning sin*, *ver. 3.* *Satisfying the souls of the people*, *ver. 4.* *Protecting and supporting them*, *ver. 5.* (2.) In the kingdom of providence, *fixing the mountains*, *ver. 6.* *Calming the sea*, *ver. 7.* *Preserving the regular succession of day and night*, *ver. 8.* *And making the earth fruitful*, *ver. 9-13.* These are blessings we are all indebted to God for, and therefore may easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves in singing of it.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm and song of David.

1. PRAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. 2. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. 3. Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. 4. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. 5. By terrible things in righteousness, wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation: who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.

The psalmist here has no particular concern of his own at the throne of grace; but begins with an address to God, as the master of an assembly, and the mouth of a congregation; and observe,

1. How he gives glory to God, *ver. 1.* (1.) By humble thankfulness, *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion*; waits in expectation of the mercy desired, waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness at its first approach. When God

God is coming towards us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises, and wait till the day of dawn. Praise waits with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will, and dependence on thy mercy; when we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God. Praise waits thine acceptance; the *Levites* by night stood in the house of the Lord, ready to sing their songs of praise at the hour appointed, (*Psal.* cxxxiv. 1, 2.) and thus their praise waited for him; *Praise is silent unto thee*, (so the word is) as wanting words to express the great goodness of God; and being struck with a silent admiration at it: As there are holy groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are holy adorings which cannot be uttered, and yet shall be accepted by him that searcheth the heart, and knoweth what is the mind of the spirit. Our praise is silent, that the praises of the blessed angels, who excel in strength, may be heard: Let it not be told him that I speak, for if a man offer to speak forth all God's praise, surely he shall be swallowed up, *Job* xxxvii. 20. Before thee, praise is reputed as silence (so the Chaldee). So far exalted is God above all our blessing and praise. Praise is due to God from all the world, but it waits for him in Sion only, in his church, among his people; all his works praise him, i. e. they minister matter for praise, but his saints only bless him by actual adorations. The redeemed church sing their new song upon mount Sion, *Rev.* xiv. 1, 3. In Sion was God's dwelling-place. (*Psal.* lxxvi. 2.) Happy they who dwell with him there, for there they will be still praising him. (2.) By sincere faithfulness. *Unto thee shall the vow be performed*, i. e. the sacrifice shall be offered up, which was vowed. We shall not be accepted in our thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received, unless we make conscience of paying the vows which we made when we were in pursuit of the mercy; for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay.

2. What he gives him glory for.

1. For hearing prayer, *ver.* 2. *Praise waits for thee*; and why is it so ready? (1.) Because thou art ready to grant our petitions. O thou that hearest prayer, thou canst answer every prayer, for thou art able to do for us more than we are able to ask or think, *Eph.* iii. 20. and thou wilt answer every prayer of faith either in kind or kindness. It is much for the glory of God's goodness, and the encouragement of ours, that he is a God hearing prayer, and has taken it among the titles of his honour to be so; and we are much wanting to ourselves if we do not take all occasions to give him his title. (2.) Because for that reason we are ready to run to him when we are in our straits; therefore, because thou art a God hearing prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come; justly doth every man's praise wait for thee, because every man's prayer waits on thee, when he is in want or distress, whatever he doth at other times. Now only the seed of Israel come to thee, and the proselytes to their religion; but when thy house shall be called a house of prayer to all people, then unto thee shall all flesh come, and be welcome, *Rom.* x. 12, 13. To him let us come, and come boldly, because he is a God that hears prayer.

2. For pardoning sin. In this, *Who is a God like unto him?* *Mic.* vii. 18. By this he proclaims his name, *Exod.* xxxiv. 7. and therefore upon this account praise waits for him, *ver.* 3. Our sins reach to the heavens, iniquities prevail against us, and appear so numerous, so heinous, that when they are set in order before us, we are full of confusion, and ready to fall into despair. They prevail so against us, that we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own; so that when we appear before God, our own consciences accuse us, and we have no replication to make; and yet, as for our transgressions, thou shalt of thine own free mercy, and for the sake of a righteousness of thine own providing, thou shalt purge them away, so that we shall not come into condemnation for them. Note, The greater our danger is by reason of sin, the more cause we have to admire the power and riches of God's pardoning mercy, which can invalidate the threatening force of our manifold transgressions, and our mighty sins.

3. For the kind entertainment he gives to those that attend upon him, and the comfort they have in communion with him. Iniquity must first be purged away, *ver.* 3. and then we are welcome to compass God's altars, *ver.* 4. They that come into communion with God, shall certainly find true happiness and full satisfaction in that communion.

(1.) They are blessed; not only blessed is the nation, *Psal.* xxxiii. 12. but blessed is the man, the particular person, how mean soever, whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; he is a happy man, for he hath the surest token of the divine favour, and the surest pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss. Observe here, (1.) What it is to come into communion with God, in order to this blessedness. (1.) It is to approach to him by laying hold on his covenant, setting our best affections upon him, and letting out our desires towards him; it is to converse with him, as one we love and value. (2.) It is to dwell in his courts, as the priests and Levites did that were at home in God's house; it is to be constant in the exercises of religion, and apply ourselves closely to them as we do that which is the business of our dwelling-place.

(2.) How we come into communion with God, not recommended by any merit of our own, or brought in by any management of our own, but by God's free choice; blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and so distinguisheth from others who are left to themselves; and it is by his effectual special grace pursuant to that choice; whom he chooseth, he causeth to approach; not only invites them, but inclines and enables them to draw nigh to him. He draws them, *John* vi. 44.

(2.) They shall be satisfied; here the psalmist changeth the person, not he shall be satisfied, the man whom thou chooseth, but we shall; which teacheth us to apply the promise to ourselves, and by an active faith to put our own names into them. *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.* Note, 1. God's holy temple, is his house; there he dwells where his ordinances are administered. 2. God keeps a good house; there is abundance of goodness in his house, righteousness, and grace, and all the comforts of the everlasting covenant; there is enough for all, enough for each; it is ready, always ready; and all on free-cost, without money, and without price. 3. In those things there is that which is satisfying to a soul, and with which all gracious souls will be satisfied; let them have the pleasure of communion with God, and that sufficeth them, they have enough, they desire no more.

4. For the glorious operations of his power on their behalf, *ver.* 5. by terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation. This may be understood of the rebukes which God in his providence sometimes gives to his own people; he often answers them by terrible things, for the awakening and quickning of them, but always in righteousness; he neither doth them any wrong, nor means them any hurt, for even then he is the God of their salvation. See *Isa.* xlv. 15. But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies; God answers his peoples prayers by the destructions made for their sakes among the heathen, and the recompence he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, the God to whom vengeance belongs, and as the God that protects and saves his people. By wonderful things (so some read it) things which are very surprising, and which we looked not for, *Isa.* lxiv. 3. Or, by things which strike an awe upon us, thou wilt answer us; the holy freedom that we are admitted to in God's courts, and the nearness of our approach to him, must not at all abate our reverence and godly fear of him; for he is terrible in his holy places.

5. For the care he takes of all his people, howsoever distressed, and whithersoever dispersed: *he is the confidence of all the ends of the earth*, i. e. of all the saints, all the world over, and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel; for he is the God of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews; the confidence of them that are afar off from his holy temple, and the courts of that, that dwell in the islands of the Gentiles; or, that are in distress upon the sea. They trust in thee, and cry to thee when they are at their wit's end, *Psal.* cvii. 27, 28. By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him wherever we are, not only in the solemn assemblies of his people, but afar off upon the sea.

6. Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power. 7. Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. 8. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. 9. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. 10. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers, thou bledest the springing thereof. 11. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. 12. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. 13. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

That we may be the more affected with the wonderful condescensions of the God of grace, it is of use to observe his power and sovereignty as the God of nature; the riches and bounty of his providential kingdom.

1. He stablisheth the earth, and it abideth, *Psal.* cxix. 90. *ver.* 6. By his own strength, he setteth fast the mountains: didst thou set them fast at first, and still keeps them firm, tho' they are sometimes shaken by earthquakes, (*seriuntque summos fulmina montes*) hence they are called everlasting mountains, *Hab.* iii. 6. Yet God's covenant with his people is said to stand more firm than they, *Isa.* liv. 10.

2. He stilleth the sea, and it is quiet, *ver.* 7. The sea in a storm makes a great noise, which adds to its threatening terror; but

but when God pleaseth he commands silence among the waves and billows, and lays them to sleep, turns the storm into a calm presently, *Pfal. cvii. 29.* And by this change in the sea, as well as by the former instance of the unchangeableness of the earth, it appears, that he whose the sea and the dry land is, is girded with power. And by this, our Lord Jesus gave a proof of his divine power, that he *commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed him.* To this instance of the quieting of the sea, he adds, as a thing much of the same nature, that he stills the tumult of the people, the common people. Nothing more unruly and unagreeable than the insurrections of the mob, the insults of the rabble; yet even these God can pacify in secret ways, and which they themselves are not aware of. Or, it may be meant of the outrage of the people that were enemies to Israel, *Pfal. ii. 1.* God has many ways to still them, and will for ever silence their tumults.

3. He renews the morning and evening, and their revolution is constant, *ver. 8.* This regular succession of day and night may be considered, (1.) As an instance of God's great power, and so it strikes an awe upon all. They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy signs or tokens; they are by them convinced that there is a supreme *numen*, a sovereign monarch, before whom they ought to fear and tremble; for in these things the invisible things of God are clearly seen; and therefore they are said to be set for signs, *Gen. i. 14.* Many of them that dwelt in the remote and dark corners of the earth, were so afraid at these tokens, that they were driven to worship them, *Deut. iv. 19.* not considering that they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and godhead, and therefore they should have been led by them to worship him. (2.) As an instance of God's great goodness, and so it brings comfort to all. *Thou makest the out-goings of the morning,* before the sun riseth, and of the evening, before the sun sets, *to rejoice.* As it is God that scatters the light of the morning, and draws the curtains of the evening, so he doth both in favour to man, and makes both to rejoice, *i. e.* gives occasion to us to rejoice in both; so that how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them, *Gen. i. 4.* both are equally welcome to the world in their season; it is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening which befriend the repose of the night. Doth the watchman wait for the morning? So doth the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in, and in which God was constantly honoured. *Thou makest them to sing,* so the word is; for every morning and every evening songs of praise were sung by the Levites, it was that which the duty of every day required. And we are to look upon our daily worship alone, and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily business, and the most delightful of our daily comforts; and if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

4. He watereth the earth, and maketh it fruitful; on this instance of God's power and goodness he enlarges very much. The psalm being probably penned upon occasion either of a more than ordinary plentiful harvest, or of a seasonable rain after long drought. How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper, is easy to observe; if the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron; which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world, that every good and perfect gift is from above, *omnia desuper*, that we must lift up our eyes above the hills, lift them up to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, out of sight; and thither must our praises return; as the first-fruits of the earth were in the heave-offerings lifted up towards heaven, by way of acknowledgment that thence they were derived. All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us.

Now observe how the common blessing of rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons is here described.

1. How much there is in it of the power and goodness of God; which is here set forth by a great variety of lively expressions. (1.) God that made the earth, hereby visits it, sends to it, gives proof of his care of it, *ver. 9.* It is a visit in mercy, which the inhabitants of the earth ought to return in praises. (2.) God that made it dry land, hereby waters it, in order to its fruitfulness; tho' the products of the earth flourished, before God had caused it to rain, yet even then there was a mist which answered the intention, and *watred the whole face of the ground*, *Gen. ii. 5, 6.* Our hearts are dry and barren, unless God himself be as the dew to us, and water us; and the plants of his own planting he will water, and make them to increase. (3.) Rain is the river of God, which is full of water; the clouds are the springs of this river, which do not flow at random, but in the channel which God cuts out for it. The showers of rain, as the rivers of water, he turneth which way soever he pleaseth. (4.) This river of God enricheth the earth, which without it would quickly be a poor thing. The riches of the earth which are produced out of its surface, are every jot as valuable and abundantly more useful and serviceable to man, than those which

No. xlii.

are hid in its bowels; we might live well enough without silver and gold; but not without corn and grass.

2. How much benefit and advantage comes by it to the earth, and to man upon it.

1. To the earth itself; the rain in season gives it a new face, nothing more reviving, more refreshing than the *rain upon the new-mown grass*, *Pfal. lxxii. 6.* even the ridges of the earth, off which the rain seems to slide, are watred abundantly, for they drink in the rain which comes oft upon them; the furrows of it which are turned up by the plough, in order to the seedness, are settled by the rain, and made fit to receive the seed, *ver. 10.* they are settled by being made soft. That which makes the foil of the heart tender, settles it; for the heart is established with that grace. Thus the springing of the year is blessed; and if the spring, that first quarter of the year, be blessed, that is an earnest of a blessing upon the whole year, which God is therefore said to crown with goodness, *ver. 11.* to compass it on every side, as the head is compassed with a crown, and to compleat the comforts of it, as the end of a thing is said to crown it. And his paths are said to drop fatness; for whatever fatness there is in the earth which impregnates its products, it comes from the out-goings of the divine goodness. Wherever God goes, he leaves the tokens of his mercy behind him, *Joel ii. 13.* and makes his path thus to shine after him. These communications of God's goodness to this lower world are very extensive, and diffusive, *ver. 12.* They *drop upon the pastures of the wilderness*, and not only upon the pastures of the inhabited land. The deserts which man takes no care of, and receives no profit from, yet are under the care of the divine providence, and the profits of them redound to the glory of God, as the great benefactor of the whole creation, tho' not immediately to the benefit of man; and we ought to be thankful not only for that which serves us, but for that which serves any part of the creation, because thereby it turns to the honour of the Creator. The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds do, yet receives as much of the rain of heaven as the most fruitful soil; for God doth good to the evil and unthankful. So extensive are the gifts of God's bounty, that in them the hills, the little hills, rejoice on every side, even the north-side, that lies most from the sun. Hills are not above the need of God's providence; little hills are not below the cognizance of it. But as when he pleaseth he can make them tremble, *Pfal. cxiv. 6.* so when he pleaseth he can make them rejoice.

2. To man upon the earth. God by providing rain for the earth, prepareth corn for man, *ver. 9.* *As for the earth, out of it cometh bread*, *Job xxviii. 5.* for out of it cometh corn; but every grain of corn that comes out of it, God himself prepared; and therefore he provides rain for the earth, that thereby he may prepare corn for man, under whose feet he has put the rest of the creatures, and for whose use he has fitted them. When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raiseth the dead, but an instance of that power, not much unlike it, as appears by that of our Saviour, *Joh. xii. 24.* and that the constant benefit we have by it, is an instance of that goodness which endureth for ever, we shall have reason to think, it is no less than a God that prepares corn for us.

Corn and cattle, are the two staple commodities with which the husbandman that deals immediately in the fruits of the earth is enriched; and both are owing to the divine goodness in watering the earth, *ver. 13.* To this it is owing that the pastures are clothed with flocks, *ver. 13.* So well stocked are the pastures, that they seem to be covered over with the cattle that are laid in them; and yet the pasture not over-charged; so well fed are the cattle, that they are the ornament and the glory of the pastures in which they are fed. The vallies are so fruitful, that they seem to be covered over with corn, in the time of harvest. The lowest parts of the earth are commonly the most fruitful, and one acre of the humble vallies is worth five of the lofty mountains. But both corn-ground, and pasture-ground answering the end of their creation, are said to shout for joy, and sing; because they are serviceable to the honour of God, and the comfort of man; and because they furnish us with matter for joy and praise: as there is no earthly joy above the joy of harvest, so there are none of the feasts of the Lord among the Jews, solemnized with greater expressions of thankfulness than the *feast of in-gathering at the end of the year*, *Exod. xxiii. 16.* Let all these common gifts of the divine bounty which we yearly and daily partake of, increase our love to God as the best of beings, and engage us to glorify him with our bodies, which he thus provides so well for.



P S A L M LXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; and it is of such a general use and application, that we need not suppose it penned upon any particular occasion. All people are here called upon to praise God, (1.) For the general instances of his sovereign dominion and power in the whole creation, ver. 1—7. (2.) For the special tokens of his favour to the church, his peculiar people, ver. 8—12. And then, (3.) The psalmist praiseth God for his own experiences of his goodness to him in particular, especially in answering his prayers, ver. 13—20. If we have learned in every thing to give thanks for ancient and modern mercies, publick and personal mercies, we shall know how to sing this psalm with grace and understanding.

¶ To the chief musician, A song or psalm.

1. **M**AKE a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands. 2. Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious. 3. Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. 4. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee, they shall sing to thy name. Selah. 5. Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. 6. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot, there did we rejoice in him. 7. He ruleth by his power for ever, his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

In these verses the psalmist calls upon all people to praise God, *all lands, all the earth*, ver. 1. All the inhabitants of the world that are capable of praising God. (1.) This speaks the glory of God, that he is worthy to be praised by all, for he is good to all, and furnisheth every nation with matter for praise. (2.) The duty of man, that all are obliged to praise God; it is part of the law of creation, and therefore is required of every creature. (3.) A prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ: the time should come when all lands should praise God, and this incense should in every place be offered to him. (4.) A hearty good-will which the psalmist had to this good work of praising God; he will abound in it himself, and wishes that God might have his tribute paid him by all the nations of the earth, and not by the land of Israel only. He excites all lands, (1.) To make a joyful noise to God: holy joy is that devout affection which should animate all our praises; and tho' it is not making a noise in religion that God will accept of, (hypocrites are said to *cause their voice to be heard on high*, Isa. lviii. 4.) yet in praising God, (1.) We must be hearty and zealous, and what we do must do it with all our might, with all that is within us; (2.) We must be open and publick, as those that are not ashamed of our Master; and both these are implied in making a noise, a joyful noise. (2.) To sing with pleasure, and to sing forth, for the edification of others, the honour of his name, *i. e.* of all that whereby he has made himself known, ver. 2. That which is the honour of God's name ought to be the matter of our praise. (3.) To make his praise glorious as far as we can. In praising God we must do it so as to glorify him, and that must be the scope and drift of all our praises. Reckon it your greatest glory to praise God; so some. It is the highest honour the creature is capable of, to be to the Creator for a name and a praise.

He had called upon all lands to praise God, ver. 1. and ver. 4. he foretels that they shall do so: *all the earth shall worship thee*; some in all parts of the earth, even the remotest regions, for the *everlasting gospel shall be preached to every nation and kindred*; and *this is the purport of it, worship him that made heaven and earth*, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. And being thus sent forth, it shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth more or less to worship God and sing unto him. In gospel-times God shall be worshipped by singing of psalms: they shall sing to God, that is, *sing to his name*, for it is only to his declarative glory, that by which he has made himself known, not to his essential glory, that we can contribute any thing by our praises.

That we may be furnished with matter for praise, we are here called upon to *come and see the works of God*; for *his own works praise him*, whether we do or no; and the reason why we do not praise him more and better, is because we do not duly and attentively observe them. Let us therefore see God's works, and observe the instances of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness, in them, ver. 5. and then speak of them, and speak of them to him, ver. 3. say unto God, *how terrible art thou in thy works! terrible in thy doings!*

1. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. God is terrible, *i. e.* admirable in his works through the greatness of his power; which is such, and shines so bright, so strong, in all he doth, that it may be truly said there are *not any works like unto his works*. Hence he is said to be fearful in praises, *Exod. xv. 11*. In all his doings towards the children of men he is terrible and to be eyed with an holy awe. Much of religion lies in a reverence for the divine providence.

2. They are formidable to his enemies, and have many a time forced and frightened them into a feigned submission ver. 3. *Through the greatness of thy power*, before which none can stand, *shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee*, they shall lie unto thee, (so the word is) *i. e.* they shall be compelled fore against their wills to make their peace with thee upon any terms. Subjection extorted by fear, is seldom sincere, and therefore force is no proper means of propagating religion; nor can there be much joy of such profelytes to the church as will in the end be found liars unto it, *Deut. xxxiii. 29*.

3. They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, ver. 6. When Israel came out of Egypt, *he turned the sea into dry land* before them, which encouraged them to follow God's conduct through the wilderness; and when they were to enter Canaan, for their encouragement in their wars, Jordan was divided before them, and they went through that flood on foot; and such foot, so signally owned by heaven, might well pass for cavalry rather than infantry in the wars of the Lord. There did the enemies tremble before them, *Exod. xv. 14, 15*. *Josh. v. 1*. But there did we rejoice in him; both trust his power (for relying on God is often expressed by rejoicing in him) and sing his praise, *Psal. cvi. 12*. There did we rejoice, *i. e.* our ancestors did, and we in their loins. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them.

4. They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion in the world, ver. 7. *He rules by his power for ever, his eyes behold the nations*. (1.) God has a commanding eye; from the height of heaven his eye commands all the inhabitants of the world, and he has a clear and full view of them all. *His eyes run to and fro through the earth*; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection. (2.) He has a commanding arm: his power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakned, never obstructed; *strong is his hand, and high is his right hand*. From hence he infers, *Let not the rebellious exalt themselves*; let not those that have revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, as Adonijah exalted himself, saying, I will be king; let not those that are in rebellion against God exalt themselves, as if there were any probability that they should gain their point; no, let them be still, for God hath said, I will be exalted, and man cannot gainsay it.

8. O blefs our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard. 9. Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. 10. For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. 11. Thou broughtest us into the net, thou laidst affliction upon our loins. 12. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

In these verses the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him: Let all lands do it, but Israel's land particularly. Blefs our God; blefs him as ours, a God in covenant with us, and that takes care of us his own: Let them *make the voice of his praise to be heard*, ver. 8. for from whom should it be heard, but from those who are his peculiar favourites, and select attendants?

Two things we have reason to blefs God for.

1. Common protection, ver. 9. He holdeth our soul in life, that it may not drop away of itself; for being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers: We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together, and his visitation that preserves our spirit; he puts our soul in life; so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued creation. When we are ready to faint and perish, he restoreth our soul, and so puts it as it were into a new life, giving new comforts: *Nen est vivere, sed valere vita*. But we are apt to stumble, and fall, and are exposed to many destructive accidents, killing disasters as well as killing diseases, and therefore as to these also we are guarded by the divine power; he *suffereth not our feet to be moved*, preventing many unforeseen evils, which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from: To him we owe it that we have not long ere this fallen into endless ruin. *He will keep the feet of his saints*.

2. Special

2. Special deliverance from great distress. Observe,

1. How grievous the distress and danger was, *ver. 11, 12.* What particular trouble of the church this refers to, doth not appear; it might be the trouble of some private persons or families only: But whatever it was, they were surprized with it, as a bird with a snare, inclosed and entangled in it as a fish in a net; they were pressed down with it, and kept under as with a load upon their loins, *ver. 11.* But they owned the hand of God in it; we are never in the net, but God brings us into it? never under affliction, but God lays it upon us: Is any thing more dangerous than fire and water? *we went through both, i. e.* afflictions of different kinds; the end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers, we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints, but he has promised, *when thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee, Isa. xliii. 2.* Yet proud and cruel men may be as dangerous as fire and water, and more so; *Beware of men, Matt. x. 17.* When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is threatening, *Psal. cxxiv. 2, 3, 4.* And that was the case here; *thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, i. e.* to trample upon us, and insult over us; to hector and abuse us, nay, and to make perfect slaves of us; they have said to our souls, *bow down that we may go over, Isa. li. 23.* While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads; yet the afflicted church in this also owns the hand of God, *thou hast caused them thus to abuse us; for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.*

2. How gracious God's design was in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is, *ver. 10.* *Thou, O God, hast proved us, and tried us.* Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace and love at the bottom of them, and our own honour and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire. (1.) That our graces by being tried, may be made more evident, and so we may be approved, as silver when it is touched and marked sterling, and this will be *to our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 7.* and perhaps in this world; Job's integrity and constancy were manifested by his afflictions. (2.) That our graces by being exercised, may be made more strong and active, and so we may be improved, as silver when it is refined by the fire, and made more clear from its dross; and this will be to our unspeakable advantage, for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness, *Heb. xii. 10.* Publick troubles are for the purifying of the church, *Dan. xi. 35. Rev. ii. 10. Deut. viii. 2.*

3. How glorious the issue was at last: The troubles of the church will certainly end well; these do so. For (1.) The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, but they get through them; we went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods. Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God there is a way through them. (2.) The inlet to a better state is much more happy: *Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place, into a well-watered place, for the word is, like the gardens of the Lord, and therefore fruitful.* God brings his people into trouble, that their comforts afterwards may be the sweeter, and that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

13. I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings: I will pay thee my vows, 14. Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken when I was in trouble. 15. I will offer unto thee burnt-sacrifices, of fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah. 16. Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. 17. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart: the Lord will not hear me. 19. But verily God hath heard me: he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. 20. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

The psalmist having before stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, to bless the Lord, here stirs up himself, and engageth himself to do it,

1. In his devotions to his God, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* He had called upon others to sing God's praises, and to make a joyful noise with them; but for himself, his resolutions go further, and he will praise God,

(1.) By costly sacrifices, which under the law were offered to the honour of God. All people had not wherewithal to offer these sacrifices, or wanted zeal to be at such an expence in praising God; but David for his part being able, is as willing in this

chargeable way to pay his homage to God; *ver. 13. I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings.* His sacrifices should be publick, in the place which God had chosen; I will go into thy house with them. Christ is our temple, to whom we must bring our spiritual gifts, and by whom they are sanctified. They should be the best of the kind; burnt-sacrifices, which were wholly consumed upon the altar to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no share; and burnt-sacrifices of fatlings; not the lame or the lean, but the best fed, and such as would be most acceptable at his own table. God that is the best, must be served with the best we have. The feast God makes for us is a *feast of fat things, full of marrow, Isa. xxv. 6.* and such sacrifices should we bring to him. He will offer bullocks with goats, so liberal would he be in his return of praise; and not strait-handed: He would not offer that which cost him nothing, but that which cost him a great deal; and this with the incense of rams, *i. e.* with the fat of rams, which being burnt upon the altar, the smoke of it would ascend like the smoke of incense. Or, Rams with incense. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the fattest of our sacrifices will not be accepted.

(2.) By a conscientious performance of his vows. We do not acceptably praise God for our deliverances out of trouble, unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble. This was the psalmist's resolution, *ver. 13, 14. I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in trouble.* Note, (1.) It is very common and very commendable, when we are under the pressure of any affliction, or in the pursuit of any mercy to make vows, and solemnly to speak them before the Lord; to bind ourselves out from sin, and bind ourselves more closely to our duty; not as if this were an equivalent, or valuable consideration, for the favour of God, but a qualification of us to receive the tokens of that favour. (2.) The vows which we made when we were in trouble, must not be forgotten when the trouble is over, but be carefully performed, for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not pay.

2. In his declarations to his friends, *ver. 16.* He calls together a congregation of good people to hear his thankful narrative of God's favours to him; *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, for (1.)* You will join with me in my praises, and help me in giving thanks: And we should be as desirous of the assistance of those that fear God in returning thanks for the mercies we have received, as in praying for those we want. (2.) You will be edified and encouraged by that which I have to say; *The humble shall hear of it, and be glad, Psal. xxxiv. 2. They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me, Psal. cxix. 74.* and therefore let me have their company, and I will declare to them, not to vain carnal people, that will banter it and make a jest of it, pearls are not to be cast before swine, but to them that fear God, and will make a good use of it, I will declare what God hath done for my soul; not in pride and vain-glory, that he might be thought more a favourite of heaven than other people, but for the honour of God, to which we owe this as a just debt, and for the edification of others. Note, God's people should communicate their experiences to each other; we should take all occasions to tell one another of the great and kind things which God has done for us, especially which he has done for our souls, the spiritual blessings with which he hath blessed us in heavenly things; these we should be most affected with our selves, and therefore with these we should be desirous to affect others.

Now what was it that God had done for his soul?

1. He had wrought in him a love to the duty of prayer, and had by his grace enlarged his heart in that duty, *ver. 17. I cried unto him with my mouth;* but if God, among other things done for our souls, had not given us the spirit of adoption, teaching and enabling us to cry *Abba Father,* we should never have done it. That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention with thankfulness to his praise; and the more, if when we cried to him with our mouth, he was extolled with our tongue, *i. e.* if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him then, when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him; and to praise him for mercy in prospect, tho' it be not yet in possession. By crying to him we do indeed extol him: He is pleased to reckon himself honoured by the humble believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that he has been pleased so far to twist interests with us; as that in seeking our own welfare we seek his glory. *His exaltation was under my tongue,* so it may be read, *i. e.* I was considering in my mind how I might exalt and magnify his name. When prayers are in our mouths, praises must be in our hearts.

2. He had wrought in him a dread of sin, as an enemy to prayer, *ver. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, I know very well the Lord will not hear me.* The Jewish writers, some of them that have the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, put a very corrupt gloss upon these words; *If I regard iniquity in my heart,* that is, say they, if I allow my self only in heart-lins, and iniquity doth not break out in my words and actions, *God will not hear me, i. e.* he will not be offended with me, will take no notice of it, so as to lay it to my charge, as if heart-

fin were no fin in God's account; the falshood of this our Saviour has shewn in his spiritual exposition of the law, *Mat. v.* But the sense of this place is plain; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, i. e.* If I have favourable thoughts of it, if I love it, indulge it, and allow my self in it, if I treat it as a friend, and bid it welcome, make provision for it, and am loth to part with it, if I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel, tho' it be but a heart-fin that is thus countenanced and made much of, if I delight in it after the inward man, God will not hear my prayer, will not accept it, or be pleased with it, nor can I expect an answer of peace to it. Note, Iniquity regarded in the heart will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for *the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* They that continue in love and league with sin, have no interest either in the promise or in the Mediator, and therefore cannot expect to speed in prayer.

3. He had graciously granted him an answer of peace to his prayers, *ver. 19. But verily God hath heard me*; tho' being conscious to myself of much amiss in me, I began to fear that my prayers would have been rejected, yet to my comfort I found that God was pleased to regard them: This God did for his soul, by answering his prayer, he gave him a token of his favour, and an evidence that he had wrought a good work in him. And therefore he concludes, *ver. 20. Blessed be God.* The two foregoing verses are the major and minor propositions of a syllogism: *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayers*, that is the proposition, *but verily God hath heard me*; that is the assumption, from which he might have rationally inferred; therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart; but instead of taking the comfort to himself, he gives the praise to God, *Blessed be God*; whatever are the premises, God's glory must always be the conclusion: *God has heard me*, and therefore *blessed be God.* Note, What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise: Mercies in answer to prayer do in a special manner oblige us to be thankful. He hath *not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy*; lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. That he adds by way of correction, it was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it. Therefore God doth not turn away our prayer, because he doth not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our comforts, and therefore ought to be the matter of our praises.

P S A L M LXVII.

This psalm relates to the church, and is calculated for the publick.

Here is (1.) *A prayer for the prosperity of the church of Israel, ver. 1.* (2.) *A prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church, ver. 2, 3, 4, 5.* (3.) *A prospect of happy and glorious times when God shall do this, ver. 6, 7.* Thus was the psalmist carried out by the spirit of prophecy, to foretel the glorious estate of the Christian church, in which Jews and Gentiles should unite into one flock; the beginning of which blessed work, ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, and the completing of it, of our prayer and hope in singing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician on Neginoth, A psalm or song.

1. **G**OD be merciful unto us, and bless us: and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. 2. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. 3. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 4. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. 5. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 6. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God shall bless us. 7. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

The composition of this psalm is such as speaks the penman's affections very warm and lively; by which spirit of devotion he was elevated to receive the spirit of prophecy, concerning the enlargement of God's kingdom.

1. He begins with a prayer for the welfare and prosperity of the church then in being, in the happiness of which he should share, and think himself happy, *ver. 1.* Our Saviour, in teaching us to say *Our Father*, has intimated that we ought to pray with and for others; so the psalmist here prays not, *God be merciful to me, and bless me*, but to us, and bless us, for we must

make supplication for all saints, and be willing and glad to take our lot with them. We are here taught, (1.) That all our happiness comes from God's mercy, and takes rise in that; and therefore the first thing prayed for is, *God be merciful to us*, to us sinners, and pardon our sins, *Luke xviii. 13.* to us miserable sinners, and help us out of our miseries. (2.) That it is conveyed by God's blessing, and secured in that. *God bless us, i. e.* give us an interest in his promises, and confer upon us all the good contained in them. God's speaking well to us, amounts to his doing well for us. God, bless us, is a comprehensive prayer; it is pity such excellent words should ever be used slightly and carelessly, and as a by-word. (3.) That it is compleated in the light of his countenance; *God cause his face to shine upon us, i. e.* God by his grace qualify us for his favour, and then give us the tokens of his favour. We need desire no more to make us happy, than to have God's face shine upon us, to have God love us, and let us know that he loves us. *To shine with us*; so the margin reads it; *with us* doing our endeavour, and let it crown that endeavour with success. If we by faith walk with God, we may hope that his face will shine with us.

2. He passeth from this to a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, *ver. 2. That thy way may be known upon earth.* Lord, I pray not only that thou wilt be merciful to us, and bless us, but that thou wilt be merciful to all mankind, *that thy way may be known upon earth.* Thus publick spirited must we be in our prayers, *Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.* We shall have never the less of God's mercy, and blessing, and favour, for others coming in to share with us. Or it may be taken thus, *God be merciful to us Jews, and bless us, that thereby thy way may be known upon earth*; that by the peculiar distinguishing tokens of thy favour to us, others may be allured to come and join themselves to us, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, Zach. viii. 23.* These verses, which point at the conversion of the Gentiles, may be taken (1.) As a prayer; and so it speaks the desire of the Old Testament saints; so far were they from wishing to monopolize the privileges of the church, that they desired nothing more than the throwing down of the inclosure, and the laying open of the advantages. See then how the spirit of the Jews in the days of Christ and his apostles, differed from the spirit of their fathers. The Israelites indeed that were of old, desired that God's name might be known among the Gentiles, those counterfeit Jews were enraged at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles; nothing in Christianity exasperated them so much as that did. (2.) As a prophecy; that it shall be as he here prays. Many scripture prophecies and promises are wrapt up in prayers, to intimate, that the answer of the church's prayer is as sure as the performance of God's promises.

Three things are here prayed for, with reference to the Gentiles.

(1.) That divine revelation might be sent among them, *ver. 2.* Two things he desires might be known upon earth, even among all nations, and not to the nation of the Jews only. (1.) God's way, *i. e.* the rule of duty; let them all know, as well as we do, *what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of them*; let them be blessed and honoured with the same righteous statutes and judgments, which are so much the praise of our nation, and the envy of all its neighbours, *Deut. iv. 8.* (2.) His saving health, or, his salvation; the former is wrapt up in his law, this in his gospel. If God makes known his way to us, and we walk in it, he will shew us his saving health, *Psal. 1. ult.* They that have themselves experimentally known the pleasantness of God's ways, and the comforts of his salvation, cannot but desire and pray that they may be known to others, even among all nations. All upon earth are bound to walk in God's way, all need his salvation, and there is in it enough for all: And therefore we should pray, that both the one and the other may be made known to all.

(2.) That divine worship may be set up among them, as it will be where divine revelation is received and embraced, *ver. 3. Let the people praise thee, O God*, let them have matter for praise, let them have hearts for praise; yea, let not only some, but all the people praise thee, all nations in their national capacity, some of all nations. It is again repeated, *ver. 5.* as that which the psalmist's heart was very much upon. They that delight in praising God themselves, cannot but desire that others also may be brought to praise him; that he may have the honour of it, and they may have the benefit of it. It is a prayer, (1.) That the gospel might be preached to them, and then they would have cause enough to praise God, as for the day-spring after a long and dark night. *Ortus est sol, Acts viii. 8.* (2.) That they might be converted and brought into the church, and then they would have a disposition to praise God; the living and true God, and not the dumb and dunghil deities they had worshipped, *Dan. v. 4.* Then their hard thoughts of God would be silenced, and they should see him in the gospel-glass to be love it self, and the proper object of praise. (3.) That they might be incorporated into solemn assemblies, and might praise God in a body, that they might all together praise him with one mind and one mouth. Thus a face of religion appears upon a land, when God

God is publicly owned, and the ordinances of religious worship duly celebrated in religious assemblies.

(3.) That the divine government may be acknowledged and cheerfully submitted to, *ver. 4. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy.* Holy joy, joy in God, and in his name, is the heart and soul of thankful praise: That all the people may praise thee, and the nations be glad. They that rejoice in the Lord always, will in every thing give thanks. The joy he wisheth to the nations is holy joy, for it is joy in God's dominion; joy that God has taken to himself his great power, and has reigned, which the unconverted nations are angry at, *Lev. xi. 17, 18.* Let them be glad, (1.) That the kingdom is the Lord's, *Psal. xxii. 28.* That he as an absolute sovereign shall govern the nations upon earth. That by the kingdom of his providence he shall over-rule the affairs of kingdoms, according to the counsel of his will, tho' they neither know him nor own him; and that in due time he shall disciple all nations by the preaching of his gospel, *Mat. xxviii. 18.* and set up the kingdom of his grace among them upon the ruin of the devil's kingdom. That he shall make them a willing people in the day of his power, and even the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ. (2.) That every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord: Let them be glad that thou shalt judge the people righteously, *i. e.* that thou shalt give a law and gospel which shall be a righteous rule of judgment, and pass an unerring sentence according to that rule upon all the children of men; against which there will lie no exception. Let us all be glad that we are not to be one another's judges, but that he that judgeth us is the Lord, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth.

3. He concludes with a joyful prospect of all good, when God shall do this, when the nations shall be converted, and brought to praise God.

1. The lower world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the fruits of that, *ver. 6. Then shall the earth yield her increase.* Not but that God gave rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons to the nations when they sat in darkness, *Acts xiv. 17.* But when they were converted, the earth yielded its increase to God; the meat and the drink then became a *meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God,* *Joel ii. 13.* and then it was fruitful to some good purpose. Then it yielded its increase more than before to the comfort of men, who through Christ acquired a covenant title to the fruits of it, and had a sanctified use of it. Note, The success of the gospel brings outward mercies along with it sometimes, righteousness exalts a nation. See *Isa. iv. 2.—lxii. 9.*

2. The upper world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the favours of that which is much better; *God, even our own God shall bless us,* *ver. 6.* And again, *ver. 7. God shall bless us.* Note, 1. There are a people in the world that can upon good grounds call God their God. 2. Believers have reason to glory in their relation to God, and the interest they have in him. It is here spoken with an air of triumph, *God, even our own God.* 3. Those who through grace call God their own, may with an humble confidence expect a blessing from him. If he be our God, he shall bless us with special blessings. 4. The blessing of God, as ours in covenant, is that which sweetens all our creature-comforts to us, and makes them comforts indeed; then we receive the increase of the earth as a mercy indeed, when with it God, even our own God, gives us his blessing.

3. All the world shall hereby be brought to do like them; *the ends of the earth shall fear him, i. e.* worship him, which is to be done with a godly fear. The blessings God bestows upon us, call upon us not only to love him, but to fear him, to keep up high thoughts of him, and to be afraid of offending him. When the gospel begins to spread, it shall get ground more and more till it reach to the ends of the earth. The leaven hid in the meal shall diffuse it self till the whole be leavened. And the many blessings which they will own themselves to have received that are brought into the church, invite others to join themselves to them. It is good to cast in our lot with those that are the blessed of the Lord.

P S A L M LXVIII.

This is a most excellent psalm, but in many places the genuine sense is not easy to come at; for in this, as in some other scriptures, there are things dark and hard to be understood. It doth not appear when or upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but probably it was when God having given him rest from all his enemies round about, he brought the ark (which was both the token of God's presence, and a type of Christ's mediation) from the house of Obed-edom, to the tent he had pitched for it in Zion; for the first words are the prayer which Moses used at the removing of the ark, *Num. x. 35.* From this he is led by the spirit of prophecy to speak glorious things concerning the Messiah, his ascension into heaven, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world. (1.)

No. XLIII,

He begins with prayer, both against God's enemies, *ver. 1, 2.* and for his people, *ver. 3.* (2.) He proceeds to praise, which takes up the rest of the psalm, calling upon all to praise God, *ver. 4, 26, 32.* and suggesting many things as matter for praise. (1.) The greatness and goodness of God, *ver. 4—6.* (2.) The wonderful works God had wrought for his people formerly, bringing them through the wilderness, *ver. 7, 8.* settling them in Canaan, *ver. 9, 10.* giving them victory over their enemies, *ver. 11, 12.* and delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, *ver. 13, 14.* (3.) The special presence of God in his church, *ver. 15—17.* (4.) The ascension of Christ, *ver. 18.* and the salvation of his people by him, *ver. 19, 20.* (5.) The victories which Christ would obtain over his enemies, and the favours he would bestow upon his church, *ver. 21—28.* (6.) The enlargement of the church by the accession of the Gentiles to it, *ver. 29—31.* And so he concludes the psalm with an awful acknowledgment of the glory and grace of God, *ver. 32—35.* With all these great things we should endeavour to be duly affected in singing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm or song of David.

1. **L**ET God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him, flee before him. 2. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. 3. But let the righteous be glad: let them rejoice before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. 4. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. 5. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. 6. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains, but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

In these verses,

1. David prays to God to appear in his glory;

(1.) For the confusion of his enemies, *ver. 1, 2. Let God arise* as a judge to pass sentence upon them, as a general to take the field and do execution upon them; and let them be scattered, and flee before him, as unable to keep their ground, much less to make head against him: *Let God arise,* as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, and the children of darkness shall be scattered, as the shadows of the evening flee before the rising sun. Let them be driven away as smoke by the wind, which ascends as if it would eclipse the sun, but is presently dispelled, and there appears no remainder of it; *Let them melt as wax before the fire,* which is presently dissolved. Thus doth David comment upon Moses's prayer, and not only repeat it with application to himself and his own times, but enlarge upon it, to direct us how to make use of scripture prayers. Nay, it looks further to the Redeemer's victory over the enemies of his kingdom, for he was the angel of the covenant that guided Israel through the wilderness. Note, 1. There are, and have been, and ever will be, such as are enemies to God, and hate him; that join in with the old serpent against the kingdom of God among men, and against the seed of the woman. 2. They are the wicked, and none but they that are enemies to God; the children of the wicked one. 3. Tho' we are to pray for our enemies as such, yet we are to pray against God's enemies as such, against their enmity to him, and all their attempts upon his kingdom. 4. If God but arise, all his impenitent implacable enemies, that will not repent to give him glory, will certainly and speedily be scattered, and driven away, and made to perish at his presence: For none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. The day of judgment will be the day of the compleat and final *perdition of ungodly men,* 2 *Pet. iii. 7.* who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear, 2 *Thes. i. 8.*

(2.) For the comfort and joy of his own people, *ver. 3. Let the righteous be glad,* that are now in sorrow, *let them rejoice before God,* in his favourable presence; God is the joy of his people, let them rejoice whenever they come before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice, let them rejoice with gladness. Note, Those who rejoice in God have reason to rejoice with exceeding joy; and this joy we ought to wish to all the saints, for it belongs to them, *Light is sown for the righteous.*

2. He praiseth God for his glorious appearances, and calls upon us to praise him, to sing to his name, and extol him.

1. As a great God, infinitely great, *ver. 4. He rides upon the heavens, by his name JAH.* He is the spring of all the motions of the heavenly bodies, directs and manageth them, as he that rides in the chariot sets it a-going; has a supreme command of the influences of heaven; he rides upon the heavens for the help of his people, *Deut. xxxiii. 26.* so swiftly, so strongly, and so much

much above the reach of opposition. These he rules by his name Jah, or Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient being, the fountain of all beings, power, motion, and perfection: This is his name for ever. When we thus extol God we must rejoice before him; holy joy in God will very well consist with that reverence and godly fear wherewith we ought to worship him.

2. As a gracious God, a God of mercy and tender compassion. He is great, but he despiseth not any, no not the meanest; nay, being a God of great power, he useth his power for the relief of those that are distressed, *ver. 5, 6*. The fatherless, the widows, the solitary, find him a God all-sufficient to them. Observe how much God's goodness is his glory. He that *rides on the heavens by his name Jah*, one would think should immediately have been adored as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the sovereign director of all the affairs of states and nations; he is so, but this he rather glories in, that he is a *father of the fatherless*. Though God be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. Happy they that have an interest in such a God as this; he that *rides upon the heavens* is a father worth having; thrice happy is the people whose God is the Lord. (1.) When families are beheaded, God takes care of them, and is himself their head, and the widows and the fatherless children shall find that in him which they have lost in the relation that is removed, and infinitely more and better. He is a *father of the fatherless* to pity them, and bless them, and teach them, to provide for them, and portion them. He will preserve them alive, *Jer. xlix. 11.* and with him they shall find mercy, *Hos. xiv. 3.* They have liberty to call him father, and to plead their relation to him as their guardian, *Psal. cxlvi. 9. x. 14, 18.* He is a judge or patron of the widows, to give them counsel and to do them right; to own them and plead their cause, *Prov. xxii. 23.* He has an ear open to all their complaints, and a hand open to all their wants. He is so in his holy habitation; which may be understood either of the habitation of his glory in heaven, there he has prepared his throne of judgment, which the fatherless and widow have free recourse to, and are taken under the protection of, *Psal. ix. 4, 7.* Or, of the habitation of his grace on earth, and so it is a direction to the widows and fatherless, how to apply themselves to God; let them go to his holy habitation, to his word and ordinances, there they may find him, and find comfort in him. (2.) When families are to be built up, he is the founder of them, God setteth the solitary in families, brings them into comfortable relations, that were lonely, gives them a convenient settlement that were unsettled; *Psal. cxiii. 9.* he makes those dwell at home that were forced to seek for relief abroad, (so Dr. Hammond) putting them that were destitute into a way of getting their livelihood, which is a very good way for man's charity, as it is of God's bounty.

3. As a righteous God (1.) In relieving the oppressed; he bringeth out those that are bound with chains, and sets them at liberty who were unjustly imprisoned, and brought into servitude. No chains can detain those whom God will make free. (2.) In reckoning with the oppressors. The rebellious dwell in a dry land, and have no comfort in that which they have got by fraud and injury. The best land will be a dry land to those that by their rebellion have forfeited the blessing of God, which is the juice and fatness of all our enjoyments. Israel was brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, but were there better provided for than the Egyptians themselves, whose land, if Nilus failed them, as it sometimes did, was a dry land.

7. O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people; when thou didst march through the wilderness. Selah. 8. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai it self was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. 9. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. 10. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. 11. The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it. 12. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home, divided the spoil. 13. Though ye have lien among pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. 14. When the Almighty scattereth kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.

The psalmist here having occasion to give God thanks for the great things he had done for him and his people of late, takes occasion from thence to praise him for what he had done for their fathers in the days of old. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies, and revive our grateful sense of them. Let it never be forgotten,

1. That God himself was the guide of Israel through the wilderness, when he had brought them out of their chains, he did not leave them in the dry land but himself went before them, in a march through the wilderness, *ver. 7.* It was not a journey but

a march, for they went as soldiers, as an army with banners. The Egyptians promised themselves that the wilderness had shut them in, but they were deceived, God's Israel having him for their leader, marched through the wilderness, and were not lost in it. Note, If God bring his people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it, and bring them out of it. *Cant. viii. 5.*

2. That he manifested his glorious presence with them at mount Sinai, *ver. 8.* Never did any people see the glory of God, nor hear his voice as Israel did, *Deut. iv. 32, 33.* Never had any people such an excellent law given them; so expounded, so enforced. Then the earth shook, and the neighbouring countries, it is likely, felt the shock; terrible thunders there were; accompanied no doubt with thunder showers, in which the heavens seemed to drop; while the divine doctrine dropt as the rain, *Deut. xxxii. 2.* Sinai it self, that vast mountain, that long ridge of mountains, was moved at the presence of God, see *Jud. v. 4, 5. Deut. xxxiii. 2. Hab. iii. 3.* This terrible appearance of the Divine Majesty, as it would possess them with a fear and dread of him, so it would encourage their faith in him and dependence upon him. Whatever mountains of difficulty lay in the way of their happy settlement, he that could move Sinai itself, could remove them, could get over them.

3. That he provided very comfortably for them both in the wilderness and in Canaan, *ver. 9, 10.* Thou didst send a plentiful rain, and hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. This may refer (1.) To the victualling of their camp with manna in the wilderness, which was rained upon them, as were also the quails, *Psal. lxxviii. 24, 27.* and it might be fitly called a rain of liberality, or munificence, for it was a memorable instance of the divine bounty. This confirmed the camp of Israel (here called God's inheritance, because he had chosen them to be a peculiar treasure to himself) when it was weary, and ready to perish: This confirmed their faith, and was a standing proof of God's power and goodness. Even in the wilderness God found a comfortable dwelling for Israel, which was his congregation. Or, (2.) To the seasonable supplies granted them in Canaan, that land flowing with milk and honey, which is said to drink water of the rain of heaven, *Deut. xi. 11.* When sometimes that fruitful land was ready to be turned into barrenness for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein, God in judgment remembered mercy, and sent them a plentiful rain, which refreshed it again, so that the congregation of Israel dwelt therein, and there was provision enough, even to satisfy their poor with bread. This looks further to the spiritual provision made for God's Israel; the spirit of Grace, and the gospel of grace are the plentiful rain, with which God confirms his inheritance, and from which their fruit is found, *Isa. xlv. 8.* Christ himself is this rain, *Psal. lxxii. 6.* He shall come as showers that water the earth.

4. That he often gave them victory over their enemies; armies, and kings of armies, appeared against them, from their first coming into Canaan, and all along in the times of the judges, till David's days, but first or last they gained their point against them, *ver. 11, 12, 14.* Observe here, (1.) That God was their commander in chief. The Lord gave the word, as general of their armies; he raised up judges for them, gave them their commissions and instructions, and assured them of success, God spoke in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine. (2.) That they had prophets, as God's messengers, to make known his mind to them. God gave them his word (the word of the Lord came unto them) and then great was the company of the preachers, prophets, and prophetesses, for the word is feminine. When God has messages to send, he will not want messengers: Or, perhaps it may allude to the womens joining in the triumph when the victory was obtained, as was usual, *Exod. xv. 20. 1 Sam. xviii. 7.* in which they took notice of the word of God, triumphing in that as much as in his works. (3.) That their enemies were defeated and put to confusion. Kings of armies did flee, did flee with the greatest terror and precipitation imaginable, did not fight and flee, but flee and flee, retired without striking a stroke: They fled apace, fled and never rallied again. (4.) That they were enriched with the plunder of the field; she that tarried at home divided the spoil. Not only the men, the soldiers that abode by the stuff, who were by a statute of distributions to share the prey, *1 Sam. xxx. 24.* but even the women that tarried at home had a share; which intimates the abundance of spoil that should be taken. (5.) That these great things which God did for them were sanctified to them, and contributed to their reformation, *ver. 14.* When the Almighty scattered kings for her, for the church, she was white as snow in Salmon, purified and refined by the mercies of God; when the host went forth against the enemy, they kept themselves from every wicked thing, and so the host returned victorious, and Israel by the victory was confirmed in their purity and piety. This account of Israel's victories is applicable to the victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer for those that are his, over death and hell. By the resurrection of Christ, our spiritual enemies were made to flee, their power was broken, and they were for ever disabled to hurt any of God's people: This victory was first notified by the women (the she publishers) to the disciples, *Mat. xxviii. 7.* and by

by them it was preached to all the world; whilst believers that tarry at home, that did not themselves contribute any thing towards it, enjoy the benefit of it, and divide the spoil.

5. That from a low and despised condition, they had been advanced to splendor and prosperity. When they were bond-slaves in Egypt, and afterwards when they were oppressed sometimes by one potent neighbour and sometimes by another, they did as it were *lie among the pots*, or rubbish, as despised, broken vessels, or as vessels in which there was no pleasure, they were black and dirty, and discoloured. But God at length *delivered them from the pots*, Psal. lxxxix. 6. and in David's time they were in a fair way to be one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the world, amiable in the eyes of all about them, *like the wings of a dove covered with silver*, ver. 13. "And (so saith Dr. Hammond) under Christ's kingdom, the heathen idolaters that were brought to the basest and most despicable condition of any creatures, worshipping wood and stone, and given up to the vilest lusts, should from that detestable condition be advanced to the service of Christ, and the practice of all christian virtues, the greatest inward beauties in the world." It may be applied also to the deliverance of the church out of a suffering state, and the comforts of particular believers after their despondencies.

15. The hill of God, *is as the hill of Bashan*, an high hill as the hill of Bashan. 16. Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in*, yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever. 17. The chariots of God *are twenty thousand*, even thousands of angels: the Lord *is among them as in Sinai*, in the holy place. 18. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts from men; yea, *for the rebellious also*, that the LORD God might dwell among them. 19. Blessed be the Lord, *who daily loadeth us with benefits*, even the God of our salvation. Selah. 20. He that is our God, *is the God of salvation*; and unto GOD the Lord *belong the issues from death*. 21. But God shall wound the head of his enemies: *and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses*.

David having given God praise for what he had done for Israel in general, as the God of Israel, ver. 8. here he comes to give him praise as Sion's God in a special manner; compare Psal. ix. 11. *Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Sion*, for which reason Sion is called the hill of God.

1. He compares it with the hill of Bashan, and other high and fruitful hills, and prefers it before them, ver. 15, 16. It is true Sion was but little and low in comparison with them, and was not covered over with flocks and herds as they were, yet upon this account it has the preheminance above them all, that it is *the hill of God*, the hill *which he desireth to dwell in*, and where he chuseth to manifest the tokens of his peculiar presence, Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. Note, It is much more honourable to be holy to God, than to be high and great in the world. *Why leap ye, ye high hills?* Why do you insult over poor Sion, and boast of your own height? This is the hill which God has chosen, and therefore tho' you exceed it in bulk, and be first-rates, because on this the royal flag is hoisted, you must all strike fail to it. Sion was especially honourable because it was a type of the gospel-church, which is therefore called mount Sion, Heb. xii. 22. and this is intimated here when he said, *the Lord will dwell in it for ever*, which must have its accomplishment in the gospel-Sion. There is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, no city to that which is incorporated by the gospel-charter, for there God dwells and will dwell for ever.

2. He compares it with mount Sinai, of which he had spoken, ver. 8. and shews that it has the Shechinah or divine presence in it, as really, tho' not as sensibly, as Sinai itself had, ver. 17. Angels are *the chariots of God*, his chariots of war, which he makes use of against his enemies, his chariots of conveyance which he sends for his friends, as he did for Elijah, and Lazarus is said to be carried by the angels: And chariots of state, in the midst of which he shews his glory and power: They are vastly numerous; *twenty thousands*, even thousands multiplied. There is an *innumerable company of angels* in the heavenly Jerusalem, Heb. xii. 22. The enemies David fought with had chariots, 2 Sam. viii. 4. but what were they for number or strength to the chariots of God? Which while David had on his side, he needed not to fear those that trusted in *chariots and horses*, Psal. xx. 7. God appeared on mount Sinai attended with myriads of angels, by whose disposition the law was given, Acts vii. 53. *He comes with ten thousands of saints*, Deut. xxxiii. 2. And still in Sion God manifests his glory, and is really present with a numerous retinue of his heavenly hosts, signified by the cherubims, between which God is said to dwell. So that, as

some read, the last words of the verse, *Sinai is in the sanctuary*, i. e. the sanctuary was to Israel instead of mount Sinai, whence they received divine oracles. Our Lord Jesus has these chariots at command; when the first-begotten was brought into the world, it was with this charge, *Let all the angels of God worship him*, Heb. i. 6. they attended him upon all occasions, and he is now among them; *Angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject to him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. And it is intimated in the New Testament that the angels are present in the solemn religious assemblies of christians, 1 Cor. xi. 10. Let the woman have a veil on her head, *because of the angels*, and see Eph. iii. 10.

3. The glory of mount Sion was the king which God *set on that holy hill*, Psal. ii. 6. who *came to the daughter of Sion*, Mat. xxi. 5. Of his ascension the psalmist here speaks, and to it it is expressly applied, Eph. iv. 8. *Thou hast ascended on high*, ver. 18. compare Psal. xlvii. 5, 6. Christ's ascending on high is here spoken of as a thing past, so sure was it; and spoken of to his honour, so great was it: It may include his whole exalted state, but points especially at his ascension into heaven, to the right hand of the Father, which was as much our advantage as his advancement. For (1.) He then triumphed over the gates of hell; he led *captivity captive*; i. e. he led his captives in triumph, as great conquerors used to do, *making a shew of them openly*, Col. ii. 15. He led those captive who had led us captives, and if he had not interposed would have held us captive for ever. Nay, he *led captivity itself captive*, having quite broke the power of sin and Satan: As he was the death of death, so he was the captivity of captivity, Hos. xiii. 14. This speaks the compleat victory which Jesus Christ obtained over our spiritual enemies, such as that through him *we also are more than conquerors*, that is, triumphers, Rom. viii. 37. (2.) He then opened the gates of heaven to all believers. *Thou hast received gifts for men*; he *gave gifts to men*, so the apostle reads it, Eph. iv. 8. For he received that he might give; on his head the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from him it might descend to the skirts of his garments: And he gave what he had received; having received power to give eternal life he doth bestow it upon *as many as were given him*, John xvii. 2. *Thou hast received gifts for men*, not for angels, fallen angels were not to be made saints, nor standing angels made gospel-ministers, Heb. ii. 5. Not for Jews only, but for all men; whoever will may reap the benefit of these gifts: The apostle tells us what these gifts were, Eph. iv. 11. *Prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers*, the institution of a gospel-ministry, and the qualification of men for it; both which are to be valued as the gifts of heaven, and the fruits of Christ's ascension. Thou hast received gifts in man; so the margin, i. e. in the human nature which Christ was pleased to clothe himself with, that he might be a *merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God*. In him as Mediator *all fulness dwells*, that *from his fulness we might receive*. To magnify the kindness and love of Christ to us in receiving these gifts for us, the psalmist observes (1.) The forfeiture we had made of them. He received them for the *rebellious also*; i. e. for those that had been rebellious; so all the children of men had been in their fallen state; perhaps it is especially meant of the Gentiles, that had been *enemies in their minds by wicked works*, Col. i. 21. For them these gifts are received, to them they are given, that they might lay down their arms, their enmity might be slain, and they might return to their allegiance. This magnifies the grace of Christ exceedingly, that through him rebels are upon their submission not only pardoned, but preferred: They have commissions given them under Christ, which some say in our law, amounts to the reversing of an attainder. Christ came to a rebellious world, not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved. (2.) The favour designed us in them, he *received gifts for the rebellious*, that *the Lord God might dwell among them*; that he might set up a church in a rebellious world, in which he would dwell by his word and ordinances, as of old, in the sanctuary: That he might set up his throne, and Christ might dwell in the hearts of particular persons that had been rebellious. The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking, was to rear up the *tabernacle of God among men*, that he might dwell with them, and they might themselves be living temples to his praise, Ezek. xxxvii. 27.

4. The glory of Sion's king is, that he is a saviour and benefactor to all his willing people, and a consuming fire to all those that persist in rebellion against him, ver. 19, 20, 21. We have here good and evil, life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us, like that, Mark xvi. 16. *He that believes shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned*.

1. They that take God for their God, and so give up themselves to him to be his people, shall be loaded with his benefits, and to them he will be a God of salvation. He that is our God, if in sincerity we avouch him to be so, and seek to him as our God, (1.) He will continually do us good, and furnish us with occasion for praise. Having mentioned the gifts Christ received for us, ver. 18. fitly doth he subjoin in the next words, *Blessed be the Lord*, for it is owing to the mediation of Christ that we live, and live comfortably, and are daily loaded with benefits. So

many, so weighty are the gifts of God's bounty to us, that he may be truly said to load us with them, he *pours out blessings* till there be *no room to receive them*, Mal. iii. 10. So constant are they, and so unwearied is he in doing us good, that he daily loads us with them, according as the necessity of every day requires. (2.) He will at length be unto us the God of salvation, of everlasting salvation, the *salvation of God* which he will *shew to them that order their conversation aright*, Psal. I. ult. the salvation of the soul. He that daily *loads us with benefits*, will not put us off with present things for a portion, but he will be the God of our salvation, and what he gives us now he gives as the God of salvation, pursuant to the great design of our salvation. *He is our God*, and therefore he will be the God of eternal salvation to us, for that only will answer the vast extent of his covenant-relation to us as our God. But hath he power to compleat this salvation? Yes certainly, *for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death*, i. e. The keys of hell and death are put into the hand of the Lord Jesus, Rev. i. 18. He having made an escape from death himself in his resurrection, he has both authority and power to rescue those that are his from the dominion of death, by altering the property of it to them, when they die, and giving them a compleat victory over it when they shall rise again; for *the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*. And to those that shall thus for ever escape death, and shall find such an outlet from it as not to be hurt of the second death, to them surely deliverances from temporal death are mercies indeed, and come from God as the God of their salvation. See 2 Cor. i. 10.

2. They that persist in their enmity to him, it will certainly be their ruin, ver. 21. *God shall wound the head of his enemies*, of Satan the old serpent, of whom it was by the first promise foretold, that *the seed of the woman should break his head*, Gen. iii. 15. Of all the powers of the nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, that oppose him and his kingdom among men, Psal. cx. 6. *He shall wound the heads over many countries*; of all those whoever they are that will *not have him to reign over them*, for those he accounts his enemies, and they shall be *brought forth and slain before him*, Luke xix. 27. He will *wound the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses*. Note, Those who go on still in their trespasses, and hate to be reformed, God looks upon as his enemies, and will treat them accordingly. In calling the head the hairy scalp, perhaps there is an allusion to Absalom whose bushy hair was his halter. Or it notes, either the most fierce and barbarous of his enemies, that let their hair grow to make themselves look the more frightful; or the most fine and delicate of his enemies, that are nice about their hair; neither the one nor the other can secure themselves from the fatal wounds which divine justice will give to the heads of those that go on in their sins.

22. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea: 23. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine enemies*, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. 24. They have seen thy goings, O God, *even the goings of my God, my king, in the sanctuary*. 25. The fingers went before, the players on instruments followed after, amongst *them were the damsels playing with timbrels*. 26. Bless ye God in the congregations, *even the Lord from the fountain of Israel*. 27. There is little Benjamin *with their ruler, the princes of Judah, and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali*. 28. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. 29. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto thee. 30. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, *till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war*. 31. Princes come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

In these verses, we have three things.

1. The gracious promise which God makes of the redemption of his people, and their victory over his and their enemies, ver. 22, 23. *The Lord said*, in his own gracious purpose and promise, I will do great things for my people, as the God of their salvation, ver. 20. God will not fail the expectations of those who by faith take him for their God. It is promised (1.) That he will set them in safety from their danger, as he had done formerly: I will *again bring them from the depths of the sea*, as he did Israel, when he brought them out of the slavery of Egypt into the ease and liberty of the wilderness. And I will *again bring them from Bashan*, as he did Israel when he brought them from their wants and wanderings in the wilderness into the fulness and settlement of the land of Canaan; for the land of Bashan was on the other side Jordan, where they had wars with Sihon and Og,

and from whence their next remove was into Canaan. Note, The former appearances of God's power and goodness for his people, should encourage their faith and hope in him for the future, that what he has done he will do again. He will *set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people*, Isa. xi. 11. and we may perhaps see repeated *all the wonders which our fathers told us of*. But this is not all (2.) That he will make them victorious over their enemies, ver. 23. *That thy feet may be dipped as thou passest along in the blood of thine enemies*, shed like water in great abundance, and the *tongue of thy dogs may lap in the same*. Dogs licked the blood of Ahab; and in the destruction of the anti-christian generation, we read of blood up to the horses' bridles, Rev. xiv. 20. The victories with which God blessed David's forces over the enemies of Israel are here prophesied of, but as types of Christ's victory over death and the grave, for himself and for all believers, in his resurrection (and theirs by virtue of his) out of the earth; and of the destruction of the enemies of Christ and his church, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

2. The welcome entertainment which God's own people shall give to these glorious discoveries of his grace, both in his word and in his works. Hath he spoken in his holiness? Has he said, he will *bring again from Bashan*? What then is required of us in return to this?

(1.) That we observe his motions, ver. 24. *They have seen thy people have seen thy goings, O God*; while others regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, they have seen *the goings of my God, my king in the sanctuary*, See here (1.) How an active faith appropriates God; he is God and king; but that is not all, he is my God and my king: And those who thus take him for theirs, may see him in all his out-goings acting as their God, as their king, for their good, and in answer to their prayers. (2.) Where God's most remarkable out-goings are, even in the sanctuary, in and by his word and ordinances; and among his people in the gospel-church especially, in and by which is made known the manifold wisdom of God: These out-goings of his *in the sanctuary* far out-shine the out-goings of the morning and the evening, and more loudly proclaim his eternal power and Godhead. (3.) What is our duty in reference to these out-goings, which is to observe them, *This is the finger of God; surely God is with us of a truth*.

(2.) That we give him glory in the most devout and solemn manner. When we see *his goings in his sanctuary*. (1.) Let those that are immediately employed in the service of the temple praise him, ver. 25. The Levites, that were some of them fingers, and others of them players on instruments, that have the nearest views of his *out-goings in his sanctuary*, and from whom it is expected that they should lead in his praises. And it being a day of extraordinary triumph, *among them were damsels playing with timbrels* to compleat the comfort. "Thus (saith Dr Hammond) when Christ is gone up to heaven the apostles shall celebrate and publish it to all the world, and even the women that were witnesses of it, shall affectionately join with them in divulging it."

And (2.) Let all the people of Israel in their solemn religious assembly give glory to God; *Bless ye God*, not only in temples but in the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, or wherever there is a congregation of those that *come forth from the fountain of Israel*, that are of the seed of Jacob, let them concur in blessing God. Publick mercies which we jointly share in, call for publick thanksgivings, which all should join in. "Thus (saith Dr Hammond) all christians shall be obliged solemnly to magnify the name of the Messiah, and to that end frequently to assemble together in congregations." And (3.) Let those among them that upon any account are the most eminent and make a figure, go before the rest in praising God, ver. 27. There was *little Benjamin* (that was the royal tribe in Saul's time) *with their rulers, the princes of Judah*, (that was the royal tribe in David's time) and *their council*, their captains or leaders. In the beginning of David's reign, there had been long war between Judah and Benjamin, but now they both join in praises for success against the common enemy. But why are the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali particularly mentioned? Perhaps, because those tribes lying towards the north, lay most exposed to the incursions of the Syrians, and others their neighbours that molested them, and therefore should be in a particular manner thankful for these victories over them. Dr Hammond gives another reason, That these were the two learned tribes, *Naphtali giveth goodly words*, Gen. xlv. 22. and Zebulun had those that *handle the pen of the writer*, Judg. v. 14. These shall join in praising God, their princes especially. It is much for the honour of God, when those that are above others in dignity, power and reputation, go before them in the worship of God; and are forward to use their influence and interest for the advancing of any service that is to be done to him. Dr Hammond notes from hence, that the kingdom of the Messiah should at length be submitted to by all the potentates and learned men in the world.

(3.) That we seek unto him, and depend upon him for the perfecting of what he has begun, ver. 28. In the former part of

the verse the psalmist speaks to Israel, *Thy God hath commanded thy strength, i. e.* Whatever is done for thee, or whatever strength thou hast to help thyself, it comes from God, his power and grace, and the word which he has commanded: Thou hast no reason to fear while thou hast strength of God's commanding; and no reason to boast while thou hast no strength but what is of his commanding. In the latter part he speaks to God, encouraged by his experiences, *Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.* Lord, confirm what thou hast commanded, and perform what thou hast promised, and bring to an happy end that good work which thou hast so gloriously begun. What God has wrought he will strengthen; where he has given true grace, he will give more grace. Some make this whole verse to be a believer's address to the Messiah, whom David calls God, as he had done, *Psal. xlv. 6, 8. Thy God, i. e.* God the Father, *has commanded thy strength, i. e.* has made thee strong for himself, as the man of his right hand, *Psal. lxxx. 17.* has treasured up strength in thee for us, therefore we pray, that thou, *O God the Son,* wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, *i. e.* wilt accomplish thine undertaking for us, by finishing thy good work in us.

3. The powerful invitation and inducement which would hereby be given to those that are without, to come in and join themselves to the church, *ver. 29, 30, 31.* This was in part fulfilled by the accession of many profelytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentile nations to the faith of Christ, and the making them fellow-heirs, and of the same body with the seed of Israel, *Eph. iii. 6.*

1. Some shall submit for fear, *ver. 30. The company of spear-men* that stand it out against Christ and his gospel, that are not willing to be ruled by him, that persecute the preachers and professors of his name, that are furious and outrageous as a multitude of bulls, fat and wanton as the calves of the people, (which is a description of those Jews and Gentiles that opposed the gospel of Christ, and did what they could to prevent the setting up of his kingdom in the world.) Lord, rebuke them, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till conquered by the convictions of their consciences, and the many checks of providence; they be every one of them brought at length to submit themselves with pieces of silver, as being glad to make their peace with the church upon any terms. Even Judas submitted himself with pieces of silver, when he returned them with this confession, *I have betrayed innocent blood.* And see *Rev. iii. 9.* Many by being rebuked, have been happily saved from being ruined. But as for those that will not submit notwithstanding these rebukes, he prays for their dispersion, which amounts to a prophecy of it; *Scatter thou the people that delight in war,* who take such a pleasure in opposing Christ, that they will never be reconciled to him. This may refer to the unbelieving Jews, who delighted in making war upon the holy seed, and would not submit themselves, and were therefore scattered over the face of the earth. David had himself been a man of war, but could appeal to God, that he never delighted in war and bloodshed for its own sake; as for those that did, and therefore would not submit to the fairest terms of peace, he doth not doubt but God would scatter them. Those are lost to all the sacred principles of humanity, as well as christianity, that can delight in war, and take a pleasure in contention; but let them expect that sooner or later they shall have enough of it, *Isa. xxxiii. 1. Rev. xiii. 10.*

2. Others shall submit for fear, *ver. 29, 31. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem,* (this David speaks of in faith, for the temple of Jerusalem was not built in his time, only the materials and model were prepared) *kings shall bring presents unto thee, i. e.* rich presents shall be brought, such as are fit for kings to bring: And even kings themselves, that stand much upon the punctilios of honour and prerogative, yet shall court the favour of Christ at a great expence. There is that in God's temple, that beauty and benefit in the service of God, and in communion with him, and in the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, that is enough to invite kings themselves to bring presents to God, to present themselves to him as living sacrifices, and with themselves the best performances. He instanceth in Egypt and Ethiopia, two countries out of which subjects and supplicants were least to be expected, *ver. 31. Princes shall come out of Egypt,* as ambassadors to seek God's favour, and submit to him; and they shall be accepted, for *the Lord of Hosts shall thereupon bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, Isa. xix. 25.* And even Ethiopia that had stretched out her hands against God's Israel, *2 Chron. xiv. 9.* should now stretch out her hands unto God, in prayer, in presents, and to take hold on him; and that soon, *Agree with thine adversary quickly.* Out of all nations some shall be gathered in to Christ, and be owned by him.

32. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the Lord, Selah: 33. To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. 34. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is

No. xliii.

over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. 35. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places, the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people: blessed be God.

The psalmist having prayed for and prophesied of the conversion of the Gentiles, here invites them to come in and join with the devout Israelites in praising God, intimating that their accession to the church would be the matter of their joy and praise, *ver. 32.* Let the kingdoms of the earth sing praises to the Lord; they all ought to do it, and when they become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, they will do it. God is here proposed to them as the proper object of praise upon several accounts.

1. Because of his supreme and sovereign dominion: *He rides upon the heavens of heavens which were of old, ver. 33.* compare *ver. 4.* He has from the beginning, nay from before all time, prepared his throne; he sits on the circuit of heaven; guides all the motions of the heavenly bodies, and from the highest heavens, which are the residence of his glory, he dispenseth the influences of his power and goodness to this lower world.

2. Because of his awful and terrible majesty he sends out his voice, and that a mighty voice; which may refer either generally to the thunder, which is called the voice of the Lord, and is said to be *powerful and full of majesty, Psal. xxix. 3, 4.* or in particular to that thunder in which God spake to Israel at mount Sinai.

3. Because of his mighty power. *Ascribe ye strength unto God, ver. 34.* Acknowledge him to be a God of such irresistible power, that it is folly to contend with him, and wisdom to submit to him; acknowledge that he has power sufficient both to protect his faithful subjects, and to destroy his stubborn adversaries; and give him the glory of all the instances of his omnipotence. *Thine is the kingdom and power, and therefore Thine is the glory.* We must acknowledge his power, (1.) In the kingdom of grace. *His excellency is over Israel;* he shews his sovereign care in protecting and governing his church; that is the excellency of his power, which is employed for the good of his people. (2.) In the kingdom of providence. *His strength is in the clouds,* whence comes the thunder of his power, the *small rain, and the great rain of his strength.* Tho' God has his strength in the clouds, yet he condescends to gather his Israel under the shadow of his wings, *Deut. xxxiii. 26.*

4. Because of the glory of his sanctuary, and the wonders wrought there, *ver. 35. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places.* God is to be admired and adored with reverence and godly fear, by all those that attend him in his holy places, that receive his oracles, that observe his operations according to them, and that pay their homage to him. He displays that out of his holy places, which speaks aloud that he will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. Out of heaven his holy place above, he doth and will shew himself a terrible God. Nor is any attribute of God more dreadful to sinners than his holiness.

5. Because of the grace bestowed upon his people; *The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people,* which the gods of the nations that were vanity and a lie could not give to their worshippers; how should they help them when they could not help themselves? All Israel's strength against their enemies came from their God, they owned they had *no might of their own, 2 Chron. xx. 12.* And all our sufficiency for our spiritual work and warfare is from the grace of God. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and not otherwise, and therefore he must have the glory of all we do, *Psal. cxv. 1.* and our humble thanks for enabling us to do it, and accepting the work of his own hands in us. If it be the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, they ought to say, *Blessed be God.* If all be from him, let all be to him.

P S A L M LXIX.

David penned this psalm when he was in affliction; and in it (1.) He complains of the great distress and trouble he was in, and earnestly begs of God to relieve and succour him, *ver. 1—21.* (2.) He imprecates the judgments of God upon his persecutors, *ver. 22—29.* (3.) He concludes with the voice of joy and praise, in an assurance that God would help and succour him, and would do well for the church, *ver. 30—36.* Now in this David was a type of Christ, and divers passages in this psalm are applied to Christ in the New Testament, and are said to have their accomplishment in him, *ver. 4, 9, 21.* and *ver. 22.* refers to the enemies of Christ. So that (like the 22d psalm) it begins with the humiliation, and ends with the exaltation of Christ, one branch of which was the destruction of the Jewish nation for persecuting

secuting him, which the imprecations here are predictions of. And in singing this psalm we must have an eye to the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed; not forgetting the sufferings of Christians too, and the glory that shall follow them; for it may lead us to think of the ruin reserved for the persecutors, and the rest reserved for the persecuted.

¶ To the chief musician upon Shoshannim, *A psalm* of David.

1. **S**AVE me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. 2. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 3. I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. 4. They that hate me without a cause, are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored *that* which I took not away. 5. O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. 6. Let not them that wait on thee, O LORD God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee, be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. 7. Because for thy sake I have born reproach: shame hath covered my face. 8. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mothers children. 9. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me. 10. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. 11. I made sackcloth also my garment: and I became a proverb to them. 12. They that sit in the gate, speak against me; and *I was* the song of the drunkards.

In these verses David complains of his troubles, intermixing with those complaints some requests for relief.

1. His complaints are very sad, and he pours them out before the Lord, as one that hoped thus to ease himself of a burden that lay very heavy upon him.

(1.) He complains of the deep impressions that his troubles made upon his spirit, *ver. 1, 2.* The waters of affliction, those bitter waters, are come unto my soul; not only threaten my life, but disquiet my mind; they fill my head with perplexing cares, and my heart with oppressive grief; so that I cannot enjoy God and my self as I used to do. We shall do pretty well if we can but keep troubles from our hearts; but when they put us out of the possession of our own souls, our case is bad. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;* but what shall we do when the spirit is wounded? That was David's case here: His thoughts sought for something to confide in, and with which to support his hope, but he found nothing; he sunk in deep mire, where there was no standing, no firm footing, the considerations that used to support and encourage him, now failed him, or were out of the way; and he was ready to give up himself for gone. He sought for something to comfort himself with, but found himself in deep waters that did overflow him, overwhelm him. He was like a sinking drowning man, in such confusion and consternation. This points at Christ's sufferings in his soul, and the inward agony he was in, when he said, *Now is my soul troubled;* and, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful;* for it was his soul that he made an offering for sin. And it instructs us when we are in affliction, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, that we may be neither soured with discontent, nor sunk into despair.

(2.) He complains of the long continuance of his troubles, *ver. 3.* *I am weary of my crying.* Tho' he could not keep his head above water, yet he cried to his God, and the more death was in view, the more life was in his prayers; yet he had not presently an answer of peace given in, no, nor so much of that support and comfort in praying, which God's people used to have; so that he was almost weary of crying, grew hoarse, and his throat so dried that he could cry no more: Nor had he his wanted satisfaction in believing, hoping and expecting, relief, *Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God;* he had almost looked his eyes out in expectation of deliverance: And yet his pleading this with God is an indication, that he is resolved not to give off from believing and praying. His throat is dried, but his heart is not; his eyes fail, but his faith doth not. Thus our Lord Jesus on the cross cried out, *why hast thou forsaken me?* And yet at the same time kept hold of his relation to him, *my God, my God.*

(3.) He complains of the malice and multitude of his enemies, their injustice and cruelty, and the hardships they put upon him, *ver. 4.* They hated him, they would destroy him, for hatred aims at the destruction of the person hated; but what was his iniquity, what was his sin, what provocation had he given them,

that they were so spiteful towards him? None at all; *They hate me without cause;* I never did them an ill turn, that they should bear me such an ill will. Our Saviour applies this to himself, *Joh. xv. 25. They hated me without a cause.* We are apt to use this in justification of our passion against those that hate us, that we never gave them cause to hate us. But it is rather an argument why we should bear it patiently, because then we suffer as Christ did, and may then expect that God will right us; they are mine enemies wrongfully, for I have been no enemy to them: In a world where unrighteousness reigns so much, we must not wonder if we meet with those that are our enemies wrongfully. Let us take care that we never do wrong, and then we may the better bear it if we receive wrong. These enemies were not to be despised, but were very formidable, both for their number, they are more than the hairs of mine head, Christ's enemies were numerous, they that came to seize him were a great multitude; how were they increased that troubled him? And for their strength they are mighty in authority and power: We are weak, but our enemies are strong; for *we wrestle against principalities and powers.* Then I restored that which I took not away: Applying this to David, (1.) It was what his enemies compelled him to; they made him suffer for that offence which he had never been guilty of. (2.) It was what he consented to, that if possible he might pacify them, and make them to be at peace with him. He might have insisted upon the laws of justice and honour, the former not requiring, and the latter commonly thought to forbid the restoring of that which we took not away, for that is to wrong our selves both in our wealth and in our reputation: Yet the case may be such sometimes as that it may become our duty: Blessed Paul, tho' free from all men, yet for the honour of Christ, and the edification of the church, made himself a servant to all. But applying it to Christ, it is an observable description of the satisfaction which he made to God for our sin by his blood; *Then he restored that which he took not away, i. e.* He underwent the punishment that was due to us, paid our debt, suffered for our offence. God's glory in some instances of it was taken away by the sin of man; man's honour, and peace, and happiness were taken away; it was not he that took them away; and yet by the merit of his death he restored them.

(4.) He complains of the unkindness of his friends and relations, and this is a grievance which with an ingenuous mind cuts as deep as any other, *ver. 8. I am become a stranger to my brethren,* they make themselves strange to me, and use me as a stranger, are shy of conversing with me, and ashamed to own me. This was fulfilled in Christ, whose brethren did not believe on him, *John vii. 5. who came to his own, and his own received him not,* *John i. 11. and who was forsaken by his disciples, whom he had been free with as his brethren.*

(5.) He complains of the contempt that was put upon him, and the reproach with which he was continually loaded. And in this especially his complaint points at Christ, who for our sakes submitted to the greatest disgrace, and made himself of no reputation; we having by sin injured God in his honour, Christ made him satisfaction, not only by divesting himself of the honours due to an incarnate deity, but by submitting to the greatest dishonours that could be done to any man. Two things David here takes notice of as aggravations of the indignities done him: (1.) The ground and matter of the reproach, *ver. 10, 11.* They ridiculed him for that by which he both humbled himself and honoured God. When men lift up themselves in pride and vain-glory, they are justly laughed at for it; but David chastened his soul, and clothed himself with sackcloth, and from his abasing himself, they took occasion to trample upon him. When men dishonour God, it is just that it turn to their dishonour; but when David purely in devotion to God, and to testify his respect to him, wept, and chastened his soul with fasting, and made sackcloth his garment, as humble penitents used to do; instead of commending his devotion, and recommending it as a great example of piety, they did all they could both to discourage him in it, and to prevent others from following his good example, for that was to his reproach; they laughed at him as a fool for mortifying himself thus; and even for this he became a proverb to them; they made him the common subject of their banter. We must not think it strange if we be ill spoken of for that which is well done, and in which we have reason to hope that we are accepted of God. Our Lord Jesus was stoned for his good works, *John x. 32.* and when he cried *Eli, Eli, my God, my God,* was bantered, as if he called for Elias. (2.) The persons that reproached him, *ver. 12.* (1.) Even the gravest, and the most honourable, from whom better was expected, *They that sit in the gate speak against me,* and their reproaches pass for the dictates of senators, and the decrees of judges; and are credited accordingly. (2.) The meanest, and the most despicable, the abjects, *Psal. xxv. 15. the scum of the country, the children of fools, yea, the children of base men,* *Job xxx. 8.* Such drunkards as they make themselves vile; and he was the song of the drunkards, they made themselves and their companions merry with him. See the ill consequences of the sin of drunkenness, it makes men despisers of those that are good, *2 Tim. iii. 3.* When the king was made sick with bottles of wine, he stretched out his hand

band with scorners, Hof. vii. 5. The bench of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful: See what is commonly the lot of the best of men, they that are the praise of the wise are the song of fools; but it is easy to those that rightly judge of things to despise being thus despised.

2. His confessions of sin are very serious, *ver. 5. O God, thou knowest my foolishness*, both what is, and what is not; my sins that I am guilty of are not hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest how innocent I am of those crimes which they charge upon me. Note, Even then when as to mens unjust accusations we plead not guilty, yet before God we must acknowledge ourselves to have deserved all that is brought upon us, and much worse. This is the genuine confession of a penitent, who knows that therefore he cannot prosper in covering his sin, and that therefore it is his wisdom to acknowledge it because it is naked and open before God. (1.) He knows the corruption of our nature. *Thou knowest the foolishness that is bound up in my heart.* All our sins take rise from our foolishness. (2.) He knows the transgressions of our lives; they are not hid from him, no not our heart-sins, no not those that are committed most secretly. They are all done in his sight, and are never cast behind his back, till they are repented of and pardoned. This is apt to be applied to Christ, for he knew no sin, yet he was made sin for us; and God knew it, nor was it hid from him, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief.

3. His supplications are very earnest. For himself, *ver. 1. Save me, O God, save me from sinking, from despairing*; Thus Christ was heard in that he feared, for he was saved from letting fall his undertaking, *Heb. v. 7.* For his friends, *ver. 6. Let not them that wait on thee O Lord God of hosts, and that seek thee, O God of Israel*: (Under these two characters we ought to seek God, and in seeking him to wait on him, as the God of Hosts who has all power to help, and as the God of Israel in covenant with his people, whom therefore he is engaged in honour and truth to help.) Let not them *be ashamed and confounded for my sake*; this intimates his fear that if God did not appear for him, it would be a discouragement to all other good people, and would give their enemies occasion to triumph over them: and his earnest desire that whatever became of him, all that seek God and wait upon him might be kept in heart, and kept in countenance, and might neither be discouraged in themselves, nor exposed to contempt from others. If Jesus Christ had not been owned and accepted of his Father in his sufferings, all that seek God and wait for him had been ashamed and confounded; but they have confidence towards God, and in his name come boldly to the throne of grace.

4. His plea is very powerful, *ver. 7, 9.* Reproach was one of the greatest of his burthens; Lord, roll away the reproach, and plead my cause, for, (1.) It is for thee that I am reproached, for serving thee and trusting in thee. *For thy sake I have born reproach.* Those that are evil spoken of for well doing may with an humble confidence leave it to God to *bring forth their righteousness as the light.* (2.) It is with thee that I am reproached. *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*, i. e. has made me forget myself, and do that which they wickedly turn to my reproach. They that hate thee and thy house for that reason hate me, because they know how zealously affected I am to it. That is it that has made them ready to eat me up, and has eaten up all the love and respect I had among them. They that blasphemed God, and spoke ill of his word and ways, did therefore reproach David, for believing in his word, and walking in his ways. Or it may be construed as an instance of David's zeal for God's house, that he resented all the indignities done to God's name, as if they had been done to his name. He laid to heart all the dishonour done to God, and the contempt cast upon religion; these he laid nearer to his heart than any outward troubles of his own. And therefore he had reason to hope God would interest himself in the reproaches cast upon him, because he had always interested himself in the reproaches cast upon God. Both the parts of this verse are applied to Christ: (1.) It was an instance of his love to his Father, that *the zeal of his house did even eat him up*, when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which minded his disciples of this text, *John ii. 17.* (2.) It was an instance of his self-denial, and that he pleased not himself, that the *reproaches of them that reproached God fell upon him*, *Rom. xv. 3.* and therein he set us an example.

13. But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. 14. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. 15. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. 16. Hear me, O LORD, for thy loving kindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17. And hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

18. Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies. 19. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. 20. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21. They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

David had been speaking before of the spiteful reproaches which his enemies cast upon him, *But as for me, my prayer is unto thee.* They spoke ill of him for his fasting and praying, and for that he was made the song of the drunkards; but notwithstanding that he resolves to continue praying. Note, Tho' we may be jeered for well-doing, we must never be jeered out of it: Those can bear but little for God, and their confessing of his name before men, that cannot bear a scoff and a hard word, rather than quit their duty. David's enemies were very abusive to him, but this was his comfort, that he had a God to go to, with whom he would lodge his cause. They think to carry their cause by insolence and calumny, but I use other methods, whatever they do, *As for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord*: And it is in an acceptable time; not the less acceptable for being a time of affliction; God will not drive us from him, tho' it is need that drives us to him: nay, it is the more acceptable, because the misery and distress of God's people makes them so much the more the objects of his pity: it is seasonable for him to help them, when all other helps fail, and they are undone, and see themselves so, if he do not help them. We find this expression used concerning Christ, *Isa. xlix. 8. In an acceptable time have I heard thee.* Now observe,

1. What his requests are. (1.) That he might have a gracious audience given to his complaints, the cry of his affliction, and the desire of his heart. *Hear me, ver. 13.* and again, *Hear me, O Lord, ver. 16. hear me speedily, ver. 17.* not only hear what I say, but grant what I ask. Christ knew that *the Father heard him always*, *John xi. 42.* (2.) That he might be rescued out of his troubles; might be saved from sinking under the load of grief; *deliver me out of the mire*; let me not stick in it, (so some) but help me out, and *set my feet on a rock*, *Psal. xl. 2.* might be saved from his enemies, that they might not swallow him up, nor have their will against him; *Let me be delivered from them that hate me*, as a lamb from the paw of the lion, *ver. 14.* Tho' I am come into deep waters, *ver. 2.* where I am ready to conclude that the floods will over-flow me, yet let my fears be prevented, and silenced, let not the water-flood, tho' it flow upon me, overflow me, *ver. 15.* Let me not fall into the gulph of despair, let not that deep swallow me up, let not that pit shut her mouth upon me, for then I am undone. He gave himself for lost in the beginning of the psalm, yet now he has his head above water, and is not so weary of crying as he thought himself. (3.) That God would turn to him, *ver. 16.* that he would smile upon him, and not hide his face from him, *ver. 17.* The tokens of God's favour to us, and the light of his countenance shining upon us, is enough to keep our spirits from sinking in the deepest mire of outward troubles, nor need we desire any more to make us safe and easy, *ver. 18.* Draw nigh to my soul, to manifest thyself to it, and that shall redeem it.

2. What his pleas are to enforce these petitions.

1. He pleads God's mercy and truth, *ver. 13. In the multitude of thy mercy hear me.* There is mercy in God, a multitude of mercies, all kinds of mercy, inexhaustible mercy, mercy enough for all, enough for each; and hence we must take our encouragement in praying. And the truth of his salvation, i. e. the truth of all those promises of salvation which he has made to those that trust in him, is a further encouragement. He repeats his argument taken from the mercy of God, *ver. 16. Hear me, for thy loving-kindness is good*; it is so in itself, it is rich and plentiful, and abundant, it is so in the account of all the saints; it is very precious to them, it is their life, their joy, their all; O let me have the benefit of it! Turn to me *according to the multitude of thy tender mercies*, *ver. 16.* See how highly he speaks of the goodness of God; in him there are mercies, tender mercies, and a multitude of them. If we think well of God, and continue to do so under the greatest hardships, we need not fear but God will do well for us; for *he taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy*, *Psal. cxlvii. 11.*

2. He pleads his own distress and affliction: hide not thy face from me, *for I am in trouble*, *ver. 17.* and therefore need thy favour; therefore it will come seasonably; and therefore I shall know how to value it. He pleads particularly the reproach he was under, and the indignities that were done him, *ver. 19. Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour.* See what a stress is laid upon this: For in the sufferings of Christ for us perhaps nothing contributed more to the satisfaction he made for sin, which had been so injurious to God in his honour, than the reproach and shame and dishonour he under-went; which God took notice of, and accepted of as more than an equivalent for the

the everlasting shame and contempt which our sins had deserved, who therefore must by repentance take shame to ourselves, and bear the reproach of our youth. And if at any time we be called out to suffer reproach and shame and dishonour for his sake, this may be our comfort, that he knows it, and as he is before-hand with us, so he will not be behind-hand with us. The psalmist speaks the language of an ingenuous nature when he saith, *ver. 20. reproach hath broken my heart, I am full of heaviness*; for it bears hard upon one that knows the worth of a good name to be put under an ill character; but when we consider what an honour it is to be dishonoured for God, and a favour if we be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (as they deemed it, *Acts v. 41.*) we shall see there is no reason at all why it should sit so heavy, or be any heart-breaking to us.

3. He pleads the insolence and cruelty of his enemies, *ver. 18. deliver me because of mine enemies*, because they were such as he had before described them; *ver. 4. Mine adversaries are all before thee*, *ver. 19. i. e. thou knowest what sort of men they are*, what danger I am in from them, what enemies they are to thee, and how much thou art reflected upon in what they do and design against me. One instance of their barbarity is given, *ver. 21. They gave me gall for my meat*, (the word signifies a bitter-herb, and is often joined with wormwood) and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. This was literally fulfilled in Christ, and did so directly point to him, that he would not say it is finished, till this was fulfilled; and on purpose that his enemies might have occasion to fulfil it, he said, *I thirst*, *John xix. 28, 29.* And some think the hyssop which they put to his mouth with the vinegar, was the bitter-herb which they gave him with the vinegar, for his meat. See how particularly the sufferings of Christ were foretold, which proves the scripture to be the word of God; and how exactly the predictions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which proves him to be the true Messiah. This is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

4. He pleads the unkindness of his friends, and his disappointment in them, *ver. 20. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none*; they all failed him like the brooks in summer. This was fulfilled in Christ, for in his sufferings, all his disciples forsook him and fled. We cannot expect too little from men, miserable comforters are they all; nor can we expect too much from God, for he is the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort, and consolation.

22. Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. 23. Let their eyes be darkened that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. 24. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. 25. Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents. 26. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. 27. Add iniquity to their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. 28. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. 29. But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

These imprecations are not David's prayers against his enemies, but prophecies of the destruction of Christ's persecutors, especially the Jewish nation, which our Lord himself foretold with tears, and which was accomplished about forty years after the death of Christ. The two first verses of this paragraph are expressly applied to the judgments of God upon the unbelieving Jews, by the apostle, *Rom. xi. 9, 10.* and therefore the whole must look that way. The rejection of the Jews for rejecting Christ, as it was a signal instance of God's justice, and an earnest of the vengeance which God will at last take on all that are obstinate in their infidelity, so it was, and continues to be, a convincing proof of the truth of the Christian religion; one great objection against it at first was, That it set aside the ceremonial law; but its doing so was effectually justified, and that objection removed, when God set it aside with a witness, by the utter destruction of the temple; and the sinking of those with the Mosaic economy that obstinately adhered to it in opposition to the gospel of Christ.

Let us observe here,

1. What the judgments are which should come upon the crucifiers of Christ; not upon all of them, for there were those who had a hand in his death, and yet repented and found mercy, *Acts ii. 23.—iii. 14, 15.* But upon those of them, and their successors who justified it by an obstinate infidelity, and rejection of his gospel, and by an inveterate enmity to his disciples and followers: See *1 Thes. ii. 15, 16.* It is here foretold,

(1.) That their sacrifices and offerings should be mischief and prejudice to them, *ver. 22. Let their table become a snare.* The

altar of the Lord, which is called his table and theirs, because in feasting upon the sacrifices they were partakers of the altar: this should have been for their welfare or peace, for they were peace-offerings, but it became a snare and a trap to them, for by their affection and adherence to the altar they were held fast in their infidelity, and hardened in their prejudices against Christ, that altar which they had no right to eat of, who continued to serve the tabernacle, *Heb. xiii. 10.*

Or, it may be understood of their common creature-comforts, even their necessary food; they had given Christ gall and vinegar, and therefore justly shall their meat and drink be made gall and vinegar to them. When the supports of life and delights of sense, through the corruption of our nature, become an occasion of sin to us, and are made the food and fuel of our sensuality, then our table is a snare, which is a good reason why we should never feed ourselves without fear, *Jude 12.*

(2.) That they should never have the comfort either of that knowledge, or of that peace, which believers are blessed with in the gospel of Christ, *ver. 23.* That they should be given up. (1.) To a judicial blindness. Let their eyes be darkened that they see not the glory of God in the face of Christ. Their sin, was that they would not see, but shut their eyes against the light, loving darkness rather; their punishment was, that they should not see, but be given up to their own hearts lusts which were hardening, and the god of this world should be permitted to blind their minds, *2 Cor. iv. 4.* This was foretold concerning them, *Isa. vi. 10.* and Christ ratified it, *Mat. xiii. 14, 15.* *John xii. 40.* (2.) To a judicial terror. There is a gracious terror, which opens the way to comfort, such as that of Paul, *Acts ix. 6.* he trembled, and was astonished: but this is a terror that shall never end in peace, make their loins continually to shake through horror of conscience, as Belshazzar, when the joints of his loins were loosed. Let them be driven to despair, and filled with constant confusion. This was fulfilled in the desperate counsels of the Jews when the Romans came upon them.

(3.) That they should fall and lie under God's anger and fiery indignation, *ver. 24. Pour out thine indignation upon them.* Note, Those who reject God's great salvation proffered to them, may justly fear his indignation to be poured out upon them; for they that submit not to the Son of his love, will certainly be made the generation of his wrath. It is the doom passed on those who believe not in Christ, that the *wrath of God abideth on them*, *John iii. 36.* it takes hold of them, and will never let them go. Salvation itself will not save those that are not willing to be ruled by it. Behold the goodness and severity of God!

(4.) That their place and nation should be utterly taken away, the very thing they were afraid of, and to prevent which, as they pretended, they persecuted Christ, *John xi. 48.* *ver. 25. Let their habitation be desolate*, which was fulfilled when their country was laid waste by the Romans, and *Sion for their sakes was plowed as a field*, *Mic. iii. 12.* The temple was the house which they were in a particular manner proud of, but this was left unto them desolate, *Mat. xxiii. 38.* Yet that is not all, it ought to be some satisfaction to us, if we be cut off from the enjoyment of our possessions, that others will have the benefit of them when we are dislodged; but it is here added, *Let none dwell in their tents*, which was remarkably fulfilled in Judah and Jerusalem, for after the destruction of the Jews, it was long ere the country was inhabited to any purpose. But this is applied particularly to Judas, by St Peter, *Acts i. 20.* For he being *Felo de se*, we may suppose his estate was confiscated, so that *his habitation was desolate, and no man of his own kindred dwelt therein.*

(5.) That their way to ruin should be down-hill, and nothing should stop them, nor interpose to prevent it, *ver. 27.* Lord, leave them to themselves to add iniquity to iniquity; and those that are bad, if they be given up to their own hearts lusts will certainly be worse: They will add sin to sin, nay, they will add rebellion to their sin, *Job xxxiv. 37.* It is said of the Jews, that they filled up their sin always, *1 Thes. ii. 16.* Add the punishment of iniquity to their iniquity, (so some read it, for the same word signifies both sin and punishment, so close is their connection) if men will sin, God will reckon for it. But those that have multiplied to sin may yet find mercy, for God multiplies to pardon, through the righteousness of the Mediator; and therefore that they might be precluded from all hopes of mercy, he adds, *Let them not come into thy righteousness*, to receive the benefit of the righteousness of God, which is by faith in a Mediator, *Phil. iii. 9.* Not that God shuts out any from that righteousness, for the gospel excludes none that do not by their unbelief exclude themselves; but let them be left to take their own course, and they will never come into this government; for being ignorant of the demands of God's righteousness, and going about to establish the merit of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, *Rom. x. 3.* And those that are so proud and self-willed that they will not come into God's righteousness, so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it, they shall not come into his righteousness. Let not them expect any benefit by it that are not willing and glad to be beholden to it.

(6.) That they should be cut off from all hopes of happiness, *ver. 18. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living*, *i. e.* Let

Let them not be suffered to live any longer, who the longer they live the more mischief they do. Multitudes of the unbelieving Jews fell by sword and famine, and none of those who had embraced the Christian faith perished among them; the nation, as a nation, was blotted out, and became not a people. Many understand it of their rejection from God's covenant, and all the privileges of it; that is the book of the living: Let the commonwealth of Israel itself, Israel according to the flesh, now become alienated from that covenant of promise, which hitherto it has had the monopoly of. Let it appear that they were never written in the Lamb's book of life, but reprobate silver let men call them, *because the Lord has rejected them*. Let them not be written with the righteous, *i. e.* let them not have a place in the congregation of the saints, when they shall all be gathered in the general assembly of those whose names are written in heaven. *Psal. i. 5.*

2. What the sin is for which these dreadful judgments should be brought upon them, *ver. 26. They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and talk to the grief of thy wounded.* (1.) Christ was he whom God had smitten, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he was esteemed stricken, *smitten of God and afflicted*, and therefore men hid their faces from him, *Isa. liii. 4, 5.* They persecuted him with a rage reaching up to heaven, they cried, crucify him, crucify him. Compare that of St Peter with this, *Acts ii. 23.* tho' he was delivered by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, it was with wicked hands, that they crucified and slew him. They talked to the grief of the Lord Jesus when he was upon the cross, saying, *He trusted in God, let him deliver him*, than which nothing could be said more grieving. (2.) The suffering saints were God's wounded, wounded in his cause, and for his sake, and them they persecuted, and talk to their grief. And for these things wrath came upon them to the utmost, *1 Thes. ii. 16.* and see *Mat. xxiii. 34, &c.* This may be understood more generally, and it teaches us, that nothing is more provoking to God, than to insult over those whom he hath smitten, and to add affliction to the afflicted upon which it justly follows here, *Add iniquity to iniquity*, see *Zech. i. 15.* Those that are of a wounded spirit, under trouble and fear about their spiritual state, ought to be very tenderly dealt with, and care must be taken not to talk to their grief, and not to make the heart of the righteous sad.

3. What the psalmist thinks of himself in the midst of all, *ver. 29. But I am poor and sorrowful*, that is the worst of my case, under outward afflictions, yet written among the righteous, and not under God's indignation as they are. It is better to be poor and sorrowful with the blessing of God, than rich and jovial, and under his curse. For they who come into God's righteousness shall soon see an end of their poverty and sorrow, and his salvation shall set them up on high, which is the thing that David here prays for, *Isa. lxi. 10.* This may be applied to Christ: He was in his humiliation poor and sorrowful, a man of sorrows, and that had not where to lay his head, but God highly exalted him, the salvation wrought for him, the salvation wrought by him, set him up on high, far above all principalities and powers.

30. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. 31. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. 32. The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God. 33. For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. 34. Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas and every thing that moveth therein. 35. For God will save Sion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. 36. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

The psalmist here, both as a type of Christ, and as an example to christians, concludes a psalm with holy joy and praise, which he began with complaints, and remonstrances of his griefs.

1. He resolves to praise God himself, not doubting but that therein he should be accepted of him, *ver. 30, 31. I will praise the name of God*, not only with my heart, but with my song, and magnify him with thanksgiving, for he is pleased to reckon himself magnified by the thankful praises of his people. It is intimated that all christians ought to glorify God with their praises, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And this shall please the Lord, through Christ, the mediator of our praises, as well as of our prayers, better than the most valuable of the legal sacrifices, *ver. 31. an ox or bullock.* This is a plain intimation that in the days of the Messiah an end should be put not only to the sacrifices of atonement, but to those of praise and acknowledgment, which were instituted by the ceremonial law; and instead of them spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are accepted; the calves of our lips, not the calves of the stall, *Heb. xiii. 15.* It is a great comfort to us that humble and thankful praises are more pleasing to God than the most costly pompous sacrifices are or ever were.

2. He encourageth other good people to rejoice in God, and continue seeking him, *ver. 32, 33. The humble shall see this and be glad.* They shall observe to their comfort, (1.) The experiences of the saints. They shall see how ready God is to hear the poor, when they cry to him, and to give them that which they call upon him for; how far he is from despising his prisoners, tho' men despise them; but he favours them with his gracious visits, and will find a time to enlarge them. *The humble shall see this and be glad*, not only because when one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it, but because it is an encouragement to them in their straits and difficulties to trust in God. It shall revive the hearts of those who seek God to see more seals and subscriptions to this truth, that Jacob's God never said to Jacob's seed, *Seek ye me in vain.* (2.) The exaltation of the Saviour, for of him the psalmist had been speaking, and of himself as a type of him. When his sorrows are over, and he entered into the joy that was set before him, when he is heard, and discharged from his imprisonment in the grave, the humble shall look upon it and be glad, and they that seek God thro' Christ shall live and be comforted; concluding, that if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him.

3. He calls upon all the creatures to praise God; the heaven, and earth, and sea, and the inhabitants of each, *ver. 34.* Heaven and earth, and the hosts of both, were made by him, and therefore let heaven and earth praise him. Angels in heaven and saints on earth; they may each of them in their respective habitations furnish themselves with matter enough for constant praise. Let the fishes of the sea, tho' mute to a proverb, praise the Lord, for the sea is his, and he made it.

The praises of the world must be offered for God's favours to his church, *ver. 35, 36.* For God will save Sion, the holy mountain, where his service was kept up. He will save all that are sanctified, and set apart to him, all that employ themselves in his worship, and all those over whom Christ reigns, for he was king upon the holy hill of Sion. He has mercy in store for the cities of Judah, of which tribe Christ was. God will do great things for the gospel-church, in which let all that wish well to it rejoice. For (1.) It shall be peopled and inhabited. There shall be added to it such as shall be saved. The cities of Judah shall be built, particular churches shall be formed and incorporated according to the gospel model, that there may be a remnant to dwell there, and to have it in possession, to enjoy the privileges conferred upon it, and to pay the tributes and services required from it. They that love his name, that have a kindness for religion in general, shall embrace the christian religion, and take their place in the christian church; they shall dwell therein, as citizens, and of the household of God. (2.) It shall be perpetuated and inherited. Christianity was not to be *res unius aetatis*, no, the seed of his servants shall inherit it. God will secure and raise up for himself a seed to serve him, and they shall inherit the privileges of their fathers, for the promise is to you and your children, as it was of old, *I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee.* The land of promise shall never be lost for want of heirs, for God can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and will do it rather than the entail shall be cut off. David shall never want a man to stand before him. The Redeemer shall see his seed, and prolong his days in them, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the mystical body compleated. And since the holy seed is the substance of the world, and if that were all gathered in it would be at an end quickly, it is just that for this assurance of the preservation of it heaven and earth should praise him.

P S A L M LXX.

This psalm is adapted to a state of affliction; it is copied almost word for word from another psalm; and some think for that reason is intitled, a psalm to bring to remembrance; for it may be of use sometimes to pray over the prayers we have formerly made to God, upon the like occasions, which may be done with new affections. David here prays that God would send (1.) Help to himself, *ver. 1, 5.* (2.) Shame to his enemies, *ver. 2, 3.* (3.) Joy to his friends *ver. 4.* These five verses were the five last verses of Psal. xl. He seems to have intended this short prayer to be both for himself and us, a salve for every sore, and therefore to be always in mind, and in singing we may apply it to our particular troubles whatever they are.

¶ To the chief musician, *A psalm* of David, to bring to remembrance.

1. **M**AKE haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD. 2. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. 3. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame, that say, Aha, aha. 4. Let all those that seek thee, rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. 5. But I am poor and needy, make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer, O LORD, make no tarrying.

The title tells us that this psalm was designed to bring to remembrance; to put God in remembrance of his mercy and promise, for so we are said to do when we pray to him, and plead with him, *Isa.* xliii. 26. *Put me in remembrance.* Not that the Eternal Mind needs a remembrancer, but this honour he is pleased to put upon the prayer of faith. It was rather to put himself and others in remembrance of former afflictions, that we may never be secure, but always in expectation of troubles: And of former devotions, that when the clouds return after the rain, we may have recourse to the same means which we have formerly found effectual for fetching in comfort and relief. We may in prayer use the same words we have often used before; our Saviour in his agony prayed thrice, saying the same words; so David here useth the same words he had used before, yet not without some alterations, to shew that he did not design to tie himself or others to them as a form. God looks at the heart, not at the words.

1. David here prays, that God would make haste to relieve and succour him, *ver.* 1, 5. *I am poor and needy*, in want and distress, and much at a loss within myself. Poverty and necessity, is a very good plea in prayer to a God of infinite mercy, who despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, and hath pronounced a blessing upon the poor in spirit; who filleth the hungry with good things. He prays (1.) That God would appear for him to deliver him under his troubles, in due time. (2.) That in the mean time, he would come in to him to help him under his troubles, that he might not sink and faint. (3.) That he would do this quickly; *make haste*, *ver.* 1. and again, *ver.* 5. *make haste, make no tarrying.* Sometimes God seems to delay helping his own people, that he may excite such earnest desires as these. *He that believeth doth not make haste*, so as to anticipate or out-run the divine counsels, so as to force a way of escape, or take any unlawful methods of relief: But he may make haste by going forth to meet God in humble prayer, that he would hasten the desired succour. *Make haste unto me*, for the longing desire of my soul is towards thee; I shall perish, if I be not speedily helped; I have no other to expect relief from. *Thou art my help and my deliverer.* Thou hast engaged to be so to all that seek thee; I depend upon thee to be so to me; I have often found thee so; and thou art sufficient, all-sufficient to be so. Therefore make haste to me.

2. He prays, that God would fill the faces of his enemies with shame, *ver.* 2, 3. Observe, (1.) How he describes them, they sought after his soul, his life, to destroy that; his mind to disturb that, to draw him from God to sin, and to despair: They desired his hurt, his ruin; when any calamity befel him, or threatened him, they said, Aha, aha, so would we have it, we shall gain our point now, and see him ruined: Thus spiteful, thus insolent, were they. (2.) What his prayer is against them; *Let them be ashamed*, i. e. Let them be brought to repentance, so filled with shame, as that may seek thy name, *Psal.* lxxxiii. 16. Let them see their fault and folly, in fighting against those whom thou dost protect, and be ashamed of their envy, *Isa.* xxvi. 11. However, let their designs against me be frustrated, and their measures broken; let them be turned back from their malicious pursuits, and then they will be ashamed and confounded, and, like the enemies of the Jews, *much cast down in their own eyes*, *Neh.* vi. 16.

3. He prays that God would fill the hearts of his friends with joy, *ver.* 4. That all those that seek God, and love his salvation, that desire it, delight in it, and depend upon it, may have continual matter for joy and praise, and hearts for both; and then he doubts not but himself to put in for a share of the blessing he prays for; and so may we, if we answer the character. (1.) Let us make the service of God our great business, and the favour of God our great delight and pleasure, for that is seeking him, and loving his salvation. Let the pursuit of a happiness in God be our great care, and the enjoyment of it our great satisfaction. A heart to love the salvation of the Lord, and to prefer it before any secular advantages whatsoever, so as cheerfully to quit all rather

than hazard our salvation, is a good evidence of our interest in it, and title to it. (2.) Let us then be assured that if it be not our own fault, the joy of the Lord shall fill our minds, and the high praises of the Lord shall fill our mouths. Those that seek God, if they seek him early, and seek him diligently, shall rejoice and be glad in him, for their seeking him is an evidence of his good will to them, and an earnest of their finding him, *Psal.* cv. 3. There is pleasure and joy even in seeking God, for it is one of the fundamental principles of religion, that God is the rewarder of all those that diligently seek him. Those that love God's salvation shall say with pleasure, with constant pleasure (for praising God, if we make it our continual work, it will be our continual feast) *Let God be magnified*, as he will be to eternity in the salvation of his people. All that wish well to the comfort of the faints, and to the glory of God, cannot but say a hearty amen to this prayer, that those who love God's salvation may say continually, *let God be magnified.*

P S A L M LXXI.

David penned this psalm in his old age, as appears by several passages in it; which makes many think that it was penned at the time of Absalom's rebellion; for that was the great trouble of his latter days: It might be occasioned by Sheba's insurrection, or some trouble that happened to him in that part of his life, of which it was foretold, that the sword should not depart from his house. But he is not over particular in representing his case, because he intended it for the general use of God's people in their affliction, especially those they meet with in their declining years; for this psalm above any other is fitted for the use of the old disciples of Jesus Christ. (1.) He begins the psalm with believing prayers; with prayers that God would deliver him and save him, *ver.* 2, 4. and not cast him off, *ver.* 9. or be far from him, *ver.* 12. And that his enemies might be put to shame, *ver.* 13. He pleads his confidence in God, *ver.* 1, 3, 5, 7. The experience he had had of help from God, *ver.* 6. And the malice of his enemies against him, *ver.* 10, 11. (2.) He concludes the psalm with believing praises, *ver.* 14, &c. Never was his hope more established, *ver.* 16, 18, 20, 21. Never were his joys and thanksgivings more enlarged, *ver.* 15, 19, 22, 23, 24. He is in an extasy of joyful praise, and in the singing of it we should have our faith in God encouraged, and our hearts raised in blessing his holy name.

1. **I**N thee, O LORD, do I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion. 2. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. 3. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me, for thou art my rock and my fortress. 4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. 5. For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth. 6. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mothers bowels, my praise shall be continually of thee. 7. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. 8. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise, and with thy honour all the day. 9. Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth. 10. For mine enemies speak against me: and they that lay wait for my soul, take counsel together, 11. Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him. 12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. 13. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul: let them be covered with reproach and dishonour, that seek my hurt.

Two things in general David here prays for; that he might not be confounded, and that his enemies and persecutors might be confounded.

1. He prays, that he might never be made ashamed of his dependence upon God, nor disappointed in his believing expectations from him. And with this petition every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace; for God will never dash the hope that is of his own raising. Now observe here,

(1.) How David professeth his confidence in God, and with what pleasure and grateful variety of expression he repeats his profession of that confidence, still presenting the profession of it to God, and pleading it with him. We praise God, and so please him,

him, by telling him (if it be indeed true) what an entire confidence we have in him, *ver. 1. In thee, O Lord, and in thee only, do I put my trust.* Whatever others do, I chuse the God of Jacob for my help. They that are entirely satisfied in God's all-sufficiency, and the truth of his promise, and in dependence upon that as sufficient to make them amends, are freely willing to do and suffer, to lose and venture for him, may truly say, *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.* Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust; if we are shy of dealing with him, it is a sign we do not trust him. *Thou art my rock and my fortress,* *ver. 3.* and again, *Thou art my refuge, my strong refuge,* *ver. 7. i. e.* I fly to thee, and am sure to be safe in thee, and under thy protection. If thou secure me, none can hurt me. *Thou art my hope and my trust,* *ver. 5. i. e.* Thou hast proposed thy self to me in thy word as the proper object of my hope and trust; I have hoped in thee, and never found it in vain to do so.

(2.) How his confidence in God is supported and encouraged by his experiences, *ver. 5, 6. Thou hast been my trust from my youth, i. e.* ever since I was capable of discerning between my right hand and my left, I stayed myself upon thee, and saw a great deal of reason to do so; for *by thee have I been holden up from the womb.* Ever since he had the use of his reason, he had been a dependent upon God's goodness, because ever since he had a being, he had been a monument of it. Note, The consideration of the gracious care which the divine providence took of us in our birth and infancy, should engage us to an early piety, and constant devotedness to his honour. He that was our help from our birth, ought to be our hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we were capable of doing him any service, we should lose no time when we are capable. This comes in here as a support to the psalmist in his present distress; not only that God had given him his life and being, bringing him out of his mother's bowels into the world, and providing that he should not die from the womb, nor give up the ghost when he came out of the belly; but that he had betimes made him one of his family, thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels into the arms of thy grace, under the shadow of thy wings, into the bond of thy covenant, thou tookest me into thy church, as a son of thine handmaid, and born in thine house, *Pfal. cxvi. 16.* And therefore (1.) I have reason to hope that thou wilt protect me; thou that hast held me up hitherto, wilt not let me fall now; thou that madest me, wilt not forsake the work of thine own hands; that helpedst me when I could not help myself, wilt not abandon me now I am upon the matter as helpless as I was then. (2.) Therefore I have reason to resolve, that I will devote myself unto thee; *My praise shall therefore be continually of thee, i. e.* I will make it my business every day to praise thee, and will take all occasions to do it.

(3.) What his requests to God are in this confidence.

1. That he might never be put to confusion, *ver. 1. i. e.* that he might not be disappointed of the mercy he expected, and so made ashamed of his expectation. Thus we may all pray in faith, that our confidence in God may not be our confusion. Hope of the glory of God is hope that maketh not ashamed.

2. That he might be delivered out of the hand of his enemies, *ver. 2. Deliver me in thy righteousness, i. e.* As thou art the righteous Judge of the world, pleading the cause of the injured; and punishing the injurious, cause me some way or other to escape: God uses with the temptation to make a way to escape, *1 Cor. x. 13. Incline thine ear unto my prayers,* and, in answer to them, save me out of my troubles, *ver. 4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hands of those that are ready to pull me in pieces.* Three things he pleads for deliverance, (1.) The encouragement God had given him to expect it. *Thou hast given commandment to save me,* *ver. 3. i. e.* Thou hast promised to do it, and such efficacy is there in God's promises, that they are often spoken of as commands; like that, *Let there be light, and there was light.* He speaks and it is done. (2.) The character of his enemies; they are wicked, unrighteous, cruel men, and it will be for the honour of God to appear against them, *ver. 4.* for he is a holy, just, and good God. (3.) The many eyes that were upon him, *ver. 7. I am as a wonder unto many;* every one waits to see what will be the issue of such extraordinary troubles as I am fallen into, and such extraordinary confidence as I profess to have in God. Or, I am looked upon as a monster, am one whom every body shuns, and therefore am undone if the Lord be not my refuge. Men abandon me, but God will not.

3. That he might always find rest and safety in God, *ver. 3. Be thou my strong habitation;* be thou to me a rock of repose, whereto I may continually resort. They are at home in God, that live a life of communion with him, and confidence in him, that continually resort unto him by faith and prayer, having their eyes ever towards him, may promise themselves a strong habitation in him, such as will never fall of itself, nor can ever be broke through by any invading power; and they shall be welcome to resort to him continually upon all occasions, and not be upbraided as coming too often.

4. That he might have continual matter for thanksgiving to God, and might be continually employed in that pleasant work, *ver. 8. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise,* as now it is with

complaints, and then I shall not be ashamed of my hope, but my enemies will be ashamed of their insolence. They that love God, love to be praising him, and desire to be doing it all the day; not only in their morning and evening devotions, not only *seven times a day,* *Pfal. cxix. 164.* but *all the day,* to intermix with all they say something or other that may redound to the honour and praise of God. They resolve to do it while they live, they hope to be doing it eternally in a better world.

5. That he might not be neglected now in his declining years, *ver. 9. Cast me not off now in the time of my old age, forsake me not when my strength fails.* Observe here, (1.) The natural sense he had of the infirmities of age; *my strength fails;* where there was strength of body, and vigour of mind, strong sight, strong voice, strong limbs, alas! in old age they fail; the life is continued, but the strength is gone, or that which is, is *labour and sorrow,* *Pfal. xc. 10.* (2.) The gracious desire he had of the continuance of God's presence with him under these infirmities. Lord, *cast me not off, do not then forsake me.* This intimates, that he should look upon himself as undone, if God should abandon him; to be cast off and forsaken of God is a thing to be dreaded at any time, especially in the time of old age, and when our strength fails us; for it is God that is the strength of our heart. But it intimates, that he had reason to hope God would not desert him; the faithful servants of God may be comfortably assured, that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails them. He is a master that doth not use to cast off old servants. In this confidence David here prays again, *ver. 12. O God, be not far from me,* let me not be under the apprehension of thy with-drawings, for then I am miserable; *O my God, a God in covenant with me, make haste for my help,* lest I perish before help come.

2. He prays that his enemies might be made ashamed of their designs against him. Observe, (1.) What it was which they unjustly said against him, *ver. 10, 11.* Their plot was deep and desperate, it was against his life, they *lay wait for my soul,* *ver. 10.* and are adversaries to that, *ver. 13.* Their powers and policies were combined, they take counsel together, and very insolent they were in their carriage; they say, *God has forsaken him, persecute and take him.* Here their premises are utterly false, that because a good man was in great trouble, and had continued long in it, and was not so soon delivered as perhaps he expected, that therefore God had forsaken him, and would have no more to do with him. All are not forsaken of God, who think so themselves, or whom others think to be so. And as their premises were false, so their inference was barbarous. If God has forsaken him, then persecute and take him, and doubt not but to make a prey of him. This is *talking to the grief of one whom God hath smitten,* *Pfal. lxix. 26.* But thus they endeavour to discourage David, as Sennacherib endeavoured to intimidate Hezekiah, by suggesting that God was his enemy, and fought against him, *Am I now come up without the Lord against this city, to destroy it?* *Isa. xxxvi. 10.* It is true, if God has forsaken a man, there is none to deliver him; but therefore to insult over him, ill becomes those who are conscious to themselves, that they deserve to be forever forsaken of God. But *rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, tho' I fall I shall rise.* He that seems to forsake for a small moment, will gather with everlasting kindness. (2.) What it was which he justly prayed against, from a spirit of prophecy, not a spirit of passion, *ver. 13.* Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul. If they will not be confounded by repentance, and so saved, let them be confounded with everlasting dishonour, and so ruined. They that turn the glory of God and his people into shame, God will turn their glory into shame.

14. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 15. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation all the day: for I know not the numbers thereof. 16. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. 17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not: until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. 19. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee? 20. Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. 21. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. 22. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou holy One of Israel. 23. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee: and my soul which thou hast

hast redeemed. 24. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

David is here in a holy transport of joy and praise, arising from his faith and hope in God; we have both together, *ver. 14.* where there is a sudden and remarkable change of his voice, his fears are all silenced, his hopes raised, and his prayers turned into thanksgivings. Let mine enemies say what they will to drive me to despair, *I will hope continually*, hope in all conditions, in the most cloudy and dark day: I will live upon hope, and will hope to the end. Since we hope in one that will never fail us, let not our hope in him fail us; and then we shall praise him yet more and more. The more they reproach me, the more closely will I cleave to thee; I will praise thee more and better than ever I have done yet. The longer we live the more expert we should grow in praising God, and the more we should abound in it. *I will add over and above all thy praise*, i. e. all the praise I have hitherto offered, for it is all too little; when we have said all we can to the glory of God's grace, there is still more to be said; it is a subject that can never be exhausted, and therefore we should never grow weary of it. Now observe in these verses,

1. How his heart is established in faith and hope, and it is a good thing that the heart be so established. Observe (1.) What he hopes in, *ver. 16.* (1.) In the power of God. *I will go in the strength of the Lord God*, not sit down in despair, but stir up myself to, and exert myself in, my work and warfare; will go forth and go on, not in any strength of my own, but in God's strength; disclaiming my own sufficiency, and depending on him only as all-sufficient; in the strength of his providence, and in the strength of his grace; we must always go about God's work in his strength, having our eyes up unto him to work in us both to will and to do. (2.) In the promise of God: *I will make mention of thy righteousness*, i. e. thy faithfulness to every word which thou hast spoken, the equity of thy disposals, and thy kindness to thy people that trust in thee. This I will make mention of as my plea in prayer for thy mercy. We may very fitly apply it to the righteousness of Christ, which is called the *righteousness of God by faith*, and which is *witnessed by the law and the prophets*; we must depend upon God's strength for assistance, and upon Christ's righteousness for acceptance. *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24.

2. What he hopes for.

(1.) He hopes that God will not leave him in his old age, but will be the same to him to the end that he had been all along, *ver. 17, 18.* Observe here, (1.) What God had done for him when he was young. *Thou hast taught me from my youth.* The good education, and good instructions which his parents gave him when he was young, he owns himself obliged to give God thanks for as a great favour. It is a blessed thing to be taught of God from our youth, from our childhood, to know the holy scriptures, and it is what we have reason to bless God for. (2.) What he had done for God when he was middle-aged, *He had declared all God's wondrous works.* Those that have got good when they are young, must be doing good when they are grown up, and must continue to communicate what they have received. We must own all the works of God's goodness to us are wondrous works, admiring he should do so much for us that are so undeserving, and we must make it our business to declare them to the glory of God, and the good of others. (3.) What he desired of God now he was old; *now I am old and gray-headed*, dying to this world, and hastning to another, *O God, forsake me not.* This is what he earnestly desires, and confidently hopes for. Those that have been taught of God from their youth, and have made it the business of their lives to honour him, may be sure he will not leave them when they are old and gray-headed, will not leave them helpless and comfortless, but will make the evil days of old age their best days, and such as they shall have occasion to say they have pleasure in. (4.) What he designed to do for God in his old-age. I will shew thy strength by my own experience of it, not only to this generation, but I will leave my observations upon record for the benefit of posterity, and so shew it to every one that is to come. As long as we live we should be endeavouring to glorify God and edify one another; and those that have had the largest and longest experience of the goodness of God to them, should improve their experiences for the good of their friends. It is a debt which the old disciples of Christ owe to the succeeding generations, to leave behind them a solemn testimony to the power, and pleasure, and advantage, of religion, and the truth of God's promises.

(2.) He hopes that God would revive him, and raise him up out of his present low and disconsolate condition, *ver. 20.* *Thou which hast made me to see and feel great and sore troubles*, above most men, *shalt quicken me again.* Note, (1.) The best of God's saints and servants are sometimes exercised with great and sore troubles in this world. (2.) God's hand is to be eyed in all the troubles of the saints, and that will help to extenuate them, and

make them seem light. He doth not say thou hast burthened me with those troubles, but shewed them me, as the tender father shews the child the rod to keep him in awe. (3.) Tho' God's people be brought never so low, he can revive them, and raise them up; are they dead? He can quicken them again: See 2 Cor. i. 9. Are they buried, as dead men out of mind? He can bring them up again from the depths of the earth, can cheer the most drooping spirit, and raise the most sinking interest. (4.) If we have a due regard to the hand of God in our troubles, we may promise ourselves in due time a deliverance out of them. Our present troubles, tho' great and sore, shall be no hindrance to our joyful resurrection from the depth of the earth; witness our great Master, to whom this may have some reference, his Father shewed him great and sore troubles, but quickened him and brought him up from the grave.

(3.) He hopes that God would not only deliver him out of his troubles, but would advance his honour and joy more than ever, *ver. 21.* Thou shalt not only restore me to my greatness again, but shalt increase it, and give me a better interest after this shock than before: thou shalt not only comfort me, but comfort me on every side, so that I shall see nothing black or threatening on any side. Note, Sometimes God makes his peoples troubles contribute to the increase of their greatness, and their sun shines the brighter for having been under a cloud. If he makes them contribute to the increase of their goodness, that will prove in the end the increase of their greatness, their glory; and if he comfort them on every side, according to the time and degree wherein he has afflicted them on every side, they will have no reason to complain. When our Lord Jesus was quickened again, and brought back from the depths of the earth, his greatness was increased, and he entered on the joy set before him.

(4.) He hopes that all his enemies would be put to confusion, *ver. 24.* He speaks of it with the greatest assurance as a thing done, and triumphs in it accordingly; *they are confounded, they are brought to shame that seek my hurt.* His honour would be their disgrace, and his comfort their vexation.

2. Let us now see how his heart is enlarged in joy and praises; how he rejoiceth in hope, and sings in hope, for we are saved by hope.

1. He will speak of God's righteousness and his salvation, as great things, things which he was well acquainted with, and much affected with, which he desired God might have the glory of, and others might have the comfortable knowledge of, *ver. 15.* *My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation;* and again, *ver. 24.* *My tongue shall talk of thy righteousness, and this all the day.* God's righteousness, which David seems here to be in a particular manner affected with, includes a great deal; the rectitude of his nature; the equity of his providential disposals; the righteous laws which he hath given us to be ruled by; the righteous promises he has given us to depend upon; and the everlasting righteousness which his Son hath brought in for our justification: God's righteousness and his salvation are here joined together, let no man think to put them asunder, nor expect salvation without righteousness, *Psal. l. ult.* If these two are made the objects of our desire, let them be made the subjects of our discourse all the day, for they are subjects that can never be drawn dry.

2. He will speak of them with wonder and admiration; as one astonished at the dimensions of divine love and grace, the height and depth, the length and breadth of it. *I know not the numbers thereof*, *ver. 15.* Tho' I cannot give a particular account of thy favours to me; they are so many, so great, if *I would count them they are more in number than the sand*, *Psal. xl. 5.* Yet knowing them to be numberless, I will be still speaking of them, for in them I shall find new matter, *ver. 19.* The righteousness that is in God is very high, that which is done by him for his people is very great; put both together, and we shall say, *O God, who is like unto thee?* This is praising God, acknowledging his perfections and performances to be (1.) Above our conception; they are very high and great; so high that we cannot apprehend them; so great, that we cannot comprehend them. (2.) Without any parallel; no being like him, no works like his. *O God, who is like unto thee?* None in heaven, none on earth, no angel, no king; God is a non-such, we do not rightly praise him, if we not own him to be so.

3. He will speak of them with all the expressions of joy and exaltation, *ver. 22, 23.* Observe (1.) How he would eye God in praising him. (1.) As a faithful God, *I will praise thee, even thy truth*; God is made known by his word, if we praise that, and the truth of that, we praise him. By faith we set to our seal that God is true; and so we praise his truth. (2.) As a God in covenant with him. O my God, whom I have consented to, and avouched for mine. As in our prayers, so in our praises we must look up to God as our God, and give him the glory of our interest in him and relation to him. (3.) As the holy One of Israel; Israel's God in a peculiar manner, glorious in his holiness among that people, and faithful to his covenant with them. It is God's honour that he is a holy One, it is his people's honour that he is the holy One of Israel. (2.) Observe how he will express his joy and exaltation, (1.) With his hand, in sacred

musick,

musick, with the psaltery, with the harp; at these David was an artist, and the best of his skill shall be employed in setting forth God's praises to such advantage as might affect others. (2.) With his lips, in sacred songs; *unto thee will I sing*, to thine honour, and with a desire to be accepted of thee: *My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee*, knowing they cannot be better employed; (3.) In both, with his heart, my soul shall rejoice *which thou hast redeemed*. Note, 1. Holy joy is the very heart and life of thankful praise. 2. We do not make melody to the Lord in singing his praises, if we do not do it with our hearts. My lips shall rejoice, but that is nothing; lip-labour, tho' never so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in serving God; the soul must be at work, and with all that is within us we must bless his holy name, else all about us is worth little. 3. Redeemed souls ought to be joyful thankful souls. The work of redemption ought above all God's works to be celebrated by us in our praises. The lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, must therefore be counted worthy of all blessing and praise.

P S A L M LXXII.

The foregoing psalm was penned by David when he was old, and, it should seem, so was this too; for Solomon was now standing fair for the crown; that was his prayer for himself, this for his son and successor, and with these two, the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended, as we find in the close of this psalm: *If we have but God's presence with us while we live, and good hopes concerning those that shall come after us, that they shall be praising God on earth when we are praising him in heaven; it is enough. This is intitled a psalm for Solomon: it is probable, David dictated it, or rather it was by the blessed Spirit dictated to him, when, a little before he died, by divine direction he settled the succession, and gave orders to proclaim Solomon king, 1 Kings i. 30. But tho' Solomon's name is here made use of, Christ's kingdom is here prophesied of under the type and figure of Solomon's. David knew what the divine oracle was, That of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, Acts ii. 30. And to him he here bare witness, and with the prospect of the glories of his kingdom he comforted himself in his dying moments, when he foresaw that his house would not be so with God, not so great, not so good, as he wished. David in spirit (1.) Begins with a short prayer for his successor, ver. 1. (2.) He passeth immediately into a long prediction of the glories of his reign, ver. 2—17. And (3.) He concludes with praise to the God of Israel, ver. 18—20. In singing this psalm we must have an eye to Christ, praising him as a king, and pleasing ourselves with our happiness as his subjects.*

¶ A psalm for Solomon:

1. **G**IVE the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

This verse is a prayer for the king, even the king's son.

1. We may apply it to Solomon, *Give him thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness*, make him a man, a king; make him a good man, a good king. (.) It is the prayer of a father for his child; a dying blessing, such as the patriarchs bequeathed to their children; the best thing we can ask of God for our children is, that God will give them wisdom and grace to know, and do their duty. That is better than gold: Solomon learned to pray for himself as his father had prayed for him, not that God would give him riches and honour, but a wise and understanding heart. It was a comfort to David that his own son was to be his successor; but more so, that he was likely to be both judicious and righteous. David had given him a good education, *Prov. iv. 3.* had taught him *good judgment and righteousness*, yet that would not do unless God gave him his judgments. Parents cannot give grace to their children, but may by prayer bring them to the God of grace, and shall not seek him in vain, for their prayer shall either be answered, or it shall return with comfort into their own bosom. (2.) It is the prayer of a king for his successor. David had executed judgment and justice during his reign, and now he prays that his son might do so too. Such a concern as this we should have for posterity, desiring and endeavouring that those who come after us may do God more and better service in their day than we have done in ours. Those have little love either to God or man, and are of a very narrow selfish spirit, who care not what becomes of the world and the church when they are gone. (3.) It is the prayer of subjects for their king. It should seem David penned this psalm for the use of the people, that they in singing might pray for Solomon. Those who would live quiet and peaceable lives must pray for kings and all in

No xliii.

authority, that God would give them his judgments and righteousness.

2. We may apply it to Christ; not that he who intercedes for us, needs us to intercede for him. But (1.) It is a prayer of the Old Testament church for sending the Messiah, as the church's king, king on the holy hill of Sion, of whom the King of kings had said, *Thou art my Son*, Psal. ii. 6, 7. Hasten his coming to whom all judgments is committed; we must thus hasten the second coming of Christ, when he shall *judge the world in righteousness*. (2.) It is an expression of the satisfaction which all true believers take in the authority which the Lord Jesus has received from the Father; let him have all power both in heaven and earth, and be the Lord our righteousness; let him be the great trustee of divine grace for all that are his: give it him, that he may give it us.

2. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. 3. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. 4. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. 5. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. 6. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. 7. In his days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 8. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. 9. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him: and his enemies shall lick the dust. 10. The kings of Tarshish, and of the isles, shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba, and Seba shall offer gifts. 11. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. 12. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth: the poor also, and him that hath no helper. 13. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. 14. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. 15. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. 16. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. 17. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.

This is a prophecy of the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ under the shadow of the reign of Solomon. It comes in (1.) As a plea to enforce the prayer, *Lord, give him thy judgments and thy righteousness*, and then *he shall judge thy people with righteousness*, and so shall answer the end of his elevation; ver. 2. Give him thy grace, and then thy people committed to his charge will have the benefit of it; *because God loved Israel, he made him king over them to do judgment and justice*, 2 Chron. ix. 8. We may in faith wrestle with God for that grace, which we have reason to think will be of common advantage to his church. (2.) As an answer of peace to the prayer. As by the prayer of faith we return answers to God's promises of mercy; so by the promises of mercy, God returns answers to our prayers of faith. That this prophecy must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah is plain, because there are many passages in it, which cannot be applied to the reign of Solomon. There was indeed a great deal of righteousness and peace at first in the administration of his government; but before the end of his reign, there was both trouble and unrighteousness. The kingdom here spoken of is to last as long as the sun, but Solomon's was soon extinct: Therefore even the Jewish expositors understand it of the kingdom of the Messiah.

Let us observe the many great and precious promises here made; which were to have their full accomplishment only in the kingdom of Christ; and yet some of them were in part fulfilled in Solomon's reign.

1. That it should be a *righteous government*, ver. 2. *He shall judge thy people with righteousness*. Compare *Isa. xi. 4.* All the laws of Christ's kingdom are consonant to the eternal rules of equity, the chancery it erects to relieve against the rigours of the broken law, is indeed a court of equity; and against the sentence of his last judgment there will lie no exception. The peace of his kingdom shall be supported by righteousness, ver. 3. for then only is the place like a river, when the *righteousness is as the waves of the sea*. The world will be judged in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31.

2. That it should be a peaceable government; the mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills, *ver. 3. i. e.* (saith Dr Hammond) both the superior and the inferior courts of judicature in Solomon's kingdom. There shall be *abundance of peace*, *ver. 7.* Solomon's name signifies peaceable, and such was his reign; for in it Israel enjoyed the victories of the foregoing reign, and preserved the tranquillity and repose of that reign. But peace is in a special manner the glory of Christ's kingdom, for as far as it prevails it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; for he is our peace.

3. That the poor and needy should be in a particular manner taken under the protection of this government; *He shall judge thy poor*, *ver. 2.* Those are God's poor that are impoverished by keeping a good conscience, and those shall be provided for with a distinguishing care, shall be judged for with judgment, with a particular cognizance taken of their case, and a particular vengeance taken for their wrongs. The poor of the people, and the children of the needy, he will be sure so to judge, as to save, *ver. 4.* This is insisted upon again, *ver. 12, 13.* intimating, that Christ will be sure to carry his cause on behalf of his injured poor. He will deliver the needy that lie at the mercy of their oppressors, the poor also, both because they have no helper, and it is for his honour to help them; and because they cry unto him, and he has promised in answer to their prayers, to help them; they by prayer *commit themselves unto him*, Psal. x. 14. He will spare the needy that throw themselves on his mercy, and will not be rigorous and severe with them, he will save their souls, and that is all they desire; *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Christ is the poor man's king.

4. That proud oppressors shall be reckoned with; he shall *break them in pieces*, *ver. 4.* shall take away their power to hurt, and punish them for all the mischief they have done: This is the office of a good king, *Parcere subiectis & debellare superbos.* The devil is the great oppressor whom Christ will break in pieces, and of whose kingdom he will be the destruction; *with the breath of his mouth shall he slay that wicked one*, Isa. xi. 4. and shall deliver the souls of his people *from deceit and violence*, *ver. 14.* He shall save them from the power of Satan, both as an old serpent working by deceit to ensnare them, and as a roaring lion working by violence to terrify and devour them. Thus *precious shall their blood be unto him*, that not a drop of it shall be shed by the deceit or violence of Satan or his instruments, but it shall be reckoned for. Christ is a king, who, tho' he calls his subjects sometimes to resist unto blood for him, yet is not prodigal of their blood, nor will ever have it parted with, but upon a valuable consideration to his glory and theirs, and the filling up of the measure of their iniquity.

5. That religion shall flourish under Christ's government, *ver. 5.* *They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure.* Solomon indeed built the temple, and the fear and worship of God was well kept up for some time under his government, but it did not last long; this therefore must point at Christ's kingdom, all the subjects of which are brought to, and kept in, the fear of God; for the christian religion has a direct tendency to, and a powerful influence upon, the support and advancement of natural religion. Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up, the fear of God; and therefore this is the everlasting gospel that is preached, *Fear God, and give honour to him*, Rev. xiv. 7. And as Christ's government promotes devotion towards God, so it promotes both justice and charity among men, *ver. 7.* *In his days shall the righteous flourish*; righteousness shall be practised, and those that practise righteousness shall be preferred. Righteousness shall abound and be in reputation, shall command and be in power. The law of Christ written in the heart, disposeth men to be honest and just, and to render to all their due; it likewise disposeth men to live in love; and so it produceth abundance of peace, and beats swords into plowshares. Both holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom, and shall never go to decay, for the subjects of it shall *fear God as long as the sun and moon endure*, *i. e.* christianity in the profession of it, having got footing in the world, shall keep its ground till the end of time, and having in the power of it got footing in the heart, it will continue there till by death the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *i. e.* the bodily senses are darkened. Through all the changes of the world, and all the changes of life, Christ's kingdom will support itself; and if the fear of God continues as long as the sun and moon, abundance of peace will. The peace of the church, the peace of the soul, shall run parallel with its purity and piety, and last as long as these last.

6. That Christ's government shall be very comfortable to all his faithful loving subjects, *ver. 6.* *He shall*, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, *come down like rain upon the mown grass*; not on that which is cut down, but that which is left growing, that it may spring again, tho' it was beheaded. The gospel of Christ distils as the rain, which softens the ground that was hard, moistens that which was dry, and so makes it green and fruitful, *Ija. lv. 10.* Let our hearts *drink in the rain*, Heb. vi. 7.

7. That Christ's kingdom shall be extended very far, and greatly enlarged; considering, (1.) The extent of his territories; *ver. 8.* *He shall have dominion from sea to sea*, from the south sea to the north, or from the Red-sea to the Mediterranean; and from the river Euphrates or Nile, to the ends of the earth. Solomon's dominion was very large, 1 Kings iv. 21. according to the promise, *Gen. xv. 18.* But no sea, no river is named, that it might, by these proverbial expressions, speak the universal monarchy of the Lord Jesus. His gospel has been, or shall be preached *to all nations*, Matt. xxiv. 14. and the *kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms*, Rev. xi. 15. when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. His territories shall be extended to those countries, (1.) That were strangers to him, *They that dwell in the wilderness*, out of all high roads, that seldom hear news, yet shall hear the glad tidings of the Redeemer, and redemption by him, *shall bow before him*, *i. e.* shall believe in him, accept of him, worship him, and take his yoke upon them. Before the Lord Jesus we must all either bow or break; if we break, we are ruined, if we bow, we are certainly made for ever. (2.) That were enemies to him, and had fought against him, *they shall lick the dust*, *i. e.* they shall be brought down and laid in the dust, shall bite the ground for vexation, and be so hunger-bitten that they shall be glad of dust, the serpent's meat, *Gen. iii. 15.* for of his seed they are; and over whom shall not he rule, when his enemies themselves are thus humbled and brought low? (2.) The dignity of his tributaries; he shall not only reign over them that dwell in the wilderness, the peasants and cottagers, but over them that dwell in the palaces, *ver. 10.* *The kings of Tarshish, and of the isles*, that lie most remote from Israel, and are *the isles of the Gentiles*, *Gen. ix. 5.* these shall bring presents to him as their sovereign lord, by, and under, whom they hold their crowns, and all their crown-lands. They shall court his favour, and make an interest in him, that they may hear his wisdom. This was literally fulfilled in Solomon; *for all the kings of the earth sought the wisdom of Solomon, and brought every man his present*, 2 Chron. ix. 23, 24. and in Christ too, when the wise men of the East, who probably, were men of the first rank in their own country, came to worship him, and *brought him presents*, Matt. ii. 11. They shall present themselves to him, that is the best present we can bring to Christ, and without that no other present is acceptable, *Rom. xii. 1.* *They shall offer gifts*, *i. e.* spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, offer them to Christ as their God, on Christ as their altar, which sanctifies every gift. Their conversion to God is called the offering up, or *sacrificing of the Gentiles*, *Rom. xv. 16.* And so is their devotion to God, *Heb. xiii. 15, 16.* Yea, all kings shall sooner or later *fall down before him*, either to do their duty to him, or to receive their doom from him, *ver. 11.* They shall fall before him, either as his willing subjects, or as his conquered captives; as supplicants for his mercy, or expectants of his judgment. And when the kings submit, the people come in of course, *all nations shall serve him*; all shall be invited into his service; some of all nations shall come into it, and in every nation, *incense shall be offered to him, and a pure offering*, Mal. i. 11. Rev. vii. 9.

8. That he shall be honoured and beloved by all his subjects, *ver. 15.* *He shall live*; his subjects shall desire his life, *O king, live for ever*, and with good reason; for he hath said, *because I live, you shall live also*; and of him it is witnessed, *that he liveth, ever liveth making intercession*, Heb. vii. 8, 25. He shall live, and live prosperously: And, (1.) Presents shall be made to him. Tho' he shall be able to live without them, for he needs neither the gifts, nor the services of any; yet to him *shall be given of the gold of Sheba*; gold, the best of metals, gold of Sheba, which, probably, was the finest gold; for he that is best, must be served with the best. They that have abundance of the wealth of this world, that have gold at command, must give it to Christ, *i. e.* must serve him with it, do good with it; *honour the Lord with thy substance*. (2.) Prayers shall be made for him; and that continually. The people prayed for Solomon, and that helped to make him and his reign so great a blessing to them. It is the duty of subjects to make prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for kings, and all in authority; not in compliment to them, as it is too often done, but in concern for the publick welfare. But how is this applied to Christ? He needs not our prayers, nor can have any benefit by them: But the Old Testament saints prayed for his coming, prayed continually for it; for they called him, *He that should come*. And now he is come, we must pray for the success of his gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom, which he calls praying for him, Hosanna to the Son of David, prosperity to his reign; and we pray for his second coming. It may be read, *prayer shall be made through him*, or for his sake, *i. e.* whatsoever we ask of the Father shall be in his name, and in dependence upon his intercession. (3.) Praises shall be made of him, and high encomiums given of his wisdom, justice, and goodness, daily shall he be praised. By praying daily in his name, we give him honour. Subjects ought to speak well of the government that is a blessing to them; and much more ought all christians to praise Jesus Christ, daily to praise him;

for they owe their all to him, and to him they lie under the highest obligations.

9. That under his government there shall be a wonderful increase both of meat and mouths, both of the fruits of the earth in the country, and of the people inhabiting the cities, *ver.* 16.

(1.) The country shall grow rich; sown but a *handful of corn on the top of the mountains*, whence one would expect but little, and yet the fruit of it shall shake like Lebanon, it shall come up like a wood, so thick, and tall, and strong, like the cedars of Lebanon. Even upon the tops of the mountains, the earth shall bring forth by handfuls; that is an expression of great plenty, *Gen.* xli. 47. as the grass upon the house-top is said to be that where-with the mower filleth not his hand. This is applicable to the wonderful products of the seed of the gospel in the days of the Messiah: A handful of that seed sown in the mountainous and barren soil of the Gentile world, produced a wonderful harvest gathered into Christ, fruit that shook like Lebanon: The fields were *white to the harvest*, *John* iv. 35. *Matt.* ix. 37. The grain of mustard-seed grew up to a great tree. (2.) The towns shall grow populous; *They of the city shall flourish like grass*, for number, for verdure. The gospel-church, the city of God among men, shall have all the marks of prosperity, many shall be added to it, and those that are shall be happy in it.

10. That his government shall be perpetual, both to his honour, and to the happiness of his subjects. The Lord Jesus shall reign for ever, and of him only this must be understood, and not at all of Solomon. It is Christ only that shall be feared throughout all generations, *ver.* 5. and as long as the sun and moon endure, *ver.* 7. (1.) The honour of the prince is immortal, and shall never be sullied, *ver.* 17. His name shall endure for ever, in despite of all the malicious attempts and endeavours of the powers of darkness to eclipse the lustre of it, and to cut off the line of it; it shall be preserved, it shall be perpetuated, and in a manner propagated: As the name of earthly princes are continued in their posterity, so Christ is in himself, *filiiabitur nomen ejus*, all nations, while the world stands, shall call him blessed; shall bless God for him, and continually speak well of him, and think themselves happy in him. To the end of time, and to eternity, his name shall be celebrated, shall be made use of; every tongue shall confess it, and every knee shall bow before it. (2.) The happiness of the people is universal too, it is compleat, and everlasting; men shall be blessed, truly and for ever blessed in him. This plainly refers to the promise made unto the fathers, that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth should be blessed, *Gen.* xii. 3.

18. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. 19. And blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and amen. 20. The prayers of David the son Jesse are ended.

Such an illustrious prophecy as is in the foregoing verses of the Messiah and his kingdom, may fitly be concluded, as it is here, with hearty prayers and praises.

1. The psalmist is here enlarged in thanksgivings for the prophecy and promise, *ver.* 18, 19. So sure is every word of God, and with so much satisfaction may we rely upon it, that we have reason enough to give thanks for what he hath said, tho' it be not yet done. We must own that for all the great things he has done for the world, for the church, for the children of men, for his own children, in the kingdom of providence, in the kingdom of grace; for all the power and trust lodged in the hands of the Redeemer, God is worthy to be praised, we must stir up ourselves and all that is within us to praise him after the best manner, and desire that all others may do it. *Blessed be the Lord*, that is, *blessed be his glorious name*; for it is only in his name, that we can contribute any thing to his glory and blessedness, and yet that is also *exalted above all blessing and praise*. Let it be blessed for ever, it shall be blessed for ever, it deserves to be blessed for ever, and we hope to be for ever blessing it. We are here taught to bless the name of Christ, and to bless God in Christ for all that which he has done for us by him. We must bless him, (1.) As the Lord God, as a self-existent, self-sufficient, being, and our sovereign Lord. (2.) As the God of Israel, in covenant with that people, and worshipped by them, and who doth this in performance of the truth unto Jacob and the mercy to Abraham. (3.) As the God who only doeth wondrous things, in creation and providence, and especially this work of redemption, which excelleth them all. Mens works are little, common, trifling things, and which without him they could not do. But God doth all by his own power, and they are wondrous things which he doth, and such as will be the eternal admiration of saints and angels.

2. He is earnest in prayer for the accomplishment of this prophecy and promise; *let the whole earth be filled with his glory*; as it will be when the kings of Tarshish, and the isles, shall bring

presents to him. It is sad to think how empty the earth is of the glory of God, how little service and honour he has from a world to which he is such a bountiful benefactor: And therefore all that wish well to the honour of God, and the welfare of mankind, cannot but desire that the earth may be filled with the discoveries of his glory, suitably returned in thankful acknowledgments of his glory. Let every heart, and every mouth, and every assembly be filled with the high praises of God. We shall see how earnest David is in this prayer, and how much his heart is in it, if we observe, (1.) How he shuts up the prayer with a double seal, *Amen, and amen*, again and again I say, I say it, and let all others say the same, so be it: Amen to my prayer; amen to the prayers of all the saints to this purpose; *Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come*. (2.) How he even shuts up his life with this prayer, *ver.* 20. This was the last psalm that ever he penned, tho' not placed last in this collection, he penned it when he lay on his death-bed, and with this he breathes his last; let God be glorified; let the kingdom of the Messiah be set up, and kept up in the world, and I have enough, I desire no more: With this let the prayers of David the son of Jesse be ended; even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

P S A L M LXXIII.

This psalm, and the ten that next follow it, carry the name of Asaph in the titles of them; if he was the penman of them (as many think) we rightly call them psalms of Asaph: If he was only the chief musician, to whom they were delivered, our marginal reading is right, which calls them psalms for Asaph. It is probable he penned them; for we read of the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, which were used in praising God in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. Tho' the spirit of prophecy by sacred songs descended chiefly on David, who is therefore styled the sweet psalmist of Israel; yet God put some of that Spirit upon those about him. This is a psalm of great use, it gives us an account of the conflict which the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. He begins his account with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and by the help of which he kept his ground, and carried his point, *ver.* 1. And then tells us, (1.) How he got into the temptation, *ver.* 2—14. (2.) How he got out of the temptation, and gained a victory over it, *ver.* 15—20. (3.) How he got by the temptation, and was the better for it, *ver.* 21—28. And if in singing this psalm we fortify ourselves against the like temptation, we do not use it in vain. The experiences of others should be our instructions.

A psalm of Asaph.

1. **T**RULY God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. 2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipped. 3. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. 5. They are not in trouble as other men: neither are they plagued like other men. 6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment. 7. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. 8. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. 9. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. 10. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. 11. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? 12. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. 13. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. 14. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

The psalm begins somewhat abruptly, yet God is good to Israel, so the margin reads it; he had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked, and while he was thus musing, the fire burned, and at last he spake by way of check to himself for what he had been thinking of, however it be, yet God is good. Tho'

Tho' wicked people receive many of the gifts of his providential bounty, yet we must own, that he is in a peculiar manner good to Israel, they have favours from him which others have not.

The psalmist designs an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with to envy the prosperity of the wicked; a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many of the saints. Now in this account,

1. He lays down in the first place that great principle which he is resolved to abide by, and not to quit while he was parleying this temptation, *ver. 1.* Job, when he was entering into such a temptation, fixed for his principle, the omniscience of God, *times are not hidden from the Almighty*, Job xxiv. 1. Jeremiah's principle, is the justice of God, *Righteous art thou, O God, when I plead with thee*, Jer. xii. 1. Habakkuk's principle, is the holiness of God, *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, Hab. i. 13. The psalmist's here, is the goodness of God; these are truths which cannot be shaken, and which we must resolve to live and die by. Tho' we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of providence with them, we must believe they are reconcileable. Note, Good thoughts of God, will fortify us against many of Satan's temptations. Truly God is good; he had had many thoughts in his mind concerning the providences of God, but this word at last settled him, for all this God is good, *good to Israel, even to them that are of a clean heart*. Note, 1. Those are the Israel of God that are of a clean heart purified by the blood of Christ, cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God. An upright heart, is a clean heart; cleanness is truth in the inward part. 2. God, who is good to all, is in a special manner good to his church and people, as he was to Israel of old. God was good to Israel in redeeming them out of Egypt, taking them into covenant with himself, giving them his laws and ordinances, and in the various providences that were concerning them; and he is in like manner good to all them that are of a clean heart, and whatever happens we must not think otherwise.

2. He comes now to relate the shock that was given to his faith, in God's distinguishing goodness to Israel, by a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and therefore to think that the Israel of God are no happier than other people, and that God is no kinder to them than to others. He speaks of it as a very fair escape, that he had not been quite foiled and overthrown by this temptation, *ver. 2.* But as for me, tho' I was so well satisfied in the goodness of God to Israel, yet my feet were almost gone, the tempter had almost tripped up my heels, my steps had well-nigh slipped, I had like to have quitted my religion, and given up all my expectations of benefit by it, for I was envious at the foolish. Note, 1. The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken, and ready to fail them. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors. 2. Those that shall never be quite undone, are sometimes very near it, and in their own apprehension as good as gone. Many a precious soul that shall live for ever, had once a very narrow turn for its life; almost and well-nigh ruined, but a step between it and a fatal apostasy, and yet snatched as a brand out of the burning, which will for ever magnify the riches of divine grace, in the nations of them that are saved.

Now let us take notice of the process of the psalmist's temptation, what he was tempted with, and tempted to.

1. He observed that foolish wicked people have oftentimes a very great share of outward prosperity. He says with grief, *the prosperity of the wicked*, *ver. 3.* Wicked people are really foolish people, and act against reason and their true interest, and yet every stander-by sees their prosperity.

(1.) They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life, *ver. 5.* *They are not in the troubles of other men*, even of wise and good men, *neither are they plagued with other men*, but seem as if by some special privilege they were exempted from the common lot of sorrows. If they meet with some little trouble, it is nothing to what others endure, that are less sinners, and yet greater sufferers.

(2.) They seem to have the greatest share of the comforts of this life. They live at ease, and bathe themselves in pleasures, so that *their eyes stand out with fatness*, *ver. 7.* See what the excess of pleasure is; the moderate use of it enlightens the eyes, but they that indulge themselves inordinately in the delights of sense, have their eyes ready to start out of their heads. Epicures are really their own tormentors, by putting a force upon nature, while they pretend to gratify it. And well may they feed themselves to the full who have more than heart could wish, more than they themselves ever thought of, or expected to be masters of. They have at least more than an humble, quiet, contented heart could wish, yet not so much as they themselves wish for. There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands, but nothing of the other life in their hearts. They are ungodly, live without the fear and worship of God, and yet they prosper and come on in the world, and not only are rich, but increase in riches, *ver. 12.* They are looked upon as thriving men, and while others have much ado to keep what they have,

they are still adding more, more honour, power, and pleasure, by increasing in riches. *They are the prosperous of the age*, so some read it.

(3.) (Which is most strange of all, and therefore is first mentioned) Their end seems to be peace; this was ever thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly, *Psal. xxxvii. 37.* and yet to outward appearance, it is oftentimes the lot of the ungodly, *ver. 4.* *There are no bands in their death.* They are not taken off by a violent death, they are foolish, and yet die not as fools die; for *their bands are not bound, nor their feet put into fetters*, 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34. They are not taken off by an untimely death, like the fruit forced from the tree before it is ripe, but are left to hang on, till, through old age, they gently drop off themselves. They do not die of sore and painful diseases, there are no pangs, no agonies in their death, but their strength is firm to the last, so that they scarce feel themselves die: They are of those who *die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet*; not of those that *die in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat with pleasure*, Job xxi. 23, 25. Nay, they are not bound by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments, they are not frightened either with remembrance of their sins, or the prospect of their misery; but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death, either by the manner of their death, or the frame of their spirits in dying. Men may die like lambs, and yet have their place with the goats.

2. He observed that they made a very ill use of their outward prosperity, and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to grudge at it. If it had done them any good, if it had made them less provoking to God, or less oppressive to man, it would never have vexed him; but it had a quite contrary effect upon them.

(1.) It made them very proud and haughty, because they live at ease; *Pride compasseth them as a chain*, *ver. 6.* They shew themselves to all that see them to be puffed up with their prosperity, as men shew their ornaments: *The pride of Israel testifies to his face*, Hos. v. 5. Isa. iii. 9. *Pride ties on their chain, or necklace*: So Dr Hammond reads it. It is no harm to wear a chain or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceaseth to be an ornament. It is not so much what the dress or apparel is, (tho' we have rules for that, 1 Tim. ii. 9.) as what principle ties it on, and with what spirit it is worn. And as the pride of sinners appears in their dress, so it doth in their talk; *they speak loftily*, *ver. 8.* They affect *great swelling words of vanity*, 2 Pet. ii. 18. bragging of themselves, and disdain all about them. Out of the abundance of the pride that is in their heart they speak big.

(2.) It made them oppressive to their poor neighbours, *ver. 6.* *Violence covereth them as a garment.* What they have got by fraud and oppression, they keep and increase by the same wicked methods, and care not what injury they do to others, nor what violence they use, so they may but enrich and aggrandize themselves. *They are corrupt*, like the giants, the sinners of the old world, when *the earth was filled with violence*, Gen. vi. 11, 13. They care not what mischief they do, either for mischief sake, or for their own advantage sake; they speak wickedly concerning oppression, they oppress, and justify themselves in it; they that speak well of sin, speak wickedly of it. They are corrupt, that is, dissolved in pleasures, and every thing that is luxurious, (so some) and then they deride and speak maliciously, they care not whom they wound with the poisoned darts of calumny, from on high they speak oppression.

(3.) It made them very insolent in their carriage, both towards God, and man, *ver. 9.* *They set their mouths against the heavens*; putting contempt upon God himself and his honour, bidding defiance to him, and his power and justice; they cannot reach the heavens with their hands to shake God's throne, else they would; but they shew their ill-will by setting their mouth against the heavens. Their tongue also walks thro' the earth, and they take liberty to abuse all that come in their way. No man's greatness or goodness can secure him from the scourge of the virulent tongue; they take a pride and pleasure in bantering all mankind; they are pests of the country, for they neither fear God, nor regard man.

(4.) In all this they were very atheistical and profane. They could not have been thus wicked, if they had not learned to say, *ver. 11.* *How doth God know?* and *is there knowledge in the most High?* So far were they from desiring the knowledge of God, who gave them all the good things they had, and would have taught them to use them well, that they were not willing to believe God had any knowledge of them, that he took any notice of their wickedness, or would ever call them to an account. As if because he is most high, he could not, or would not, see them, Job xxii. 22. Whereas because he is most high, therefore he can and will take cognizance of all the children of men, and of all they do, or say, or think. What an affront is it to the God of infinite knowledge, from whom all knowledge is, to ask, *Is there knowledge in him?* Well may he say, *ver. 12.* *Behold, these are the ungodly.*

3. He observed, that while wicked men thus prospered in their impiety, and were made more impious by their prosperity, good people

people were in great affliction, and he himself in particular, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to quarrel with providence.

(1.) He looked abroad, and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss, *ver. 10.* Because the wicked are so very daring, therefore his people return hither, *i. e.* they are at the same pause, the same plunge that I am at; they know not what to say to it no more than I do, and the rather, because waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; they are not only made to drink, and to drink deep of the bitter cup of affliction, but to drink all, care is taken that they lose not a drop of that unpleasant potion, the waters are wrung out unto them; that they may have the dregs of the cup. They pour out abundance of tears when they hear wicked people blaspheme God, and speak profanely, as David did, *Psal. cxix. 136.* These are the waters wrung out to them.

(2.) He looked at home, and felt himself under the continual frowns of providence; while the wicked were sunning themselves in its smiles, *ver. 14.* For my part, saith he, *All the day long have I been plagued* with one affliction or another, and *chastened every morning*, as duly as the morning comes. His afflictions were great, he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, every morning with the morning, and they continued, without intermission, all the day long. This he thought was very hard, that when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he that worshipped God was under such great affliction. He spoke feelingly when he spoke of his own troubles, no disputing against sense, except by faith.

4. From all this arose a very strong temptation to cast off his religion. (1.) Some that observed the prosperity of the wicked, especially comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a providence, and to think that God had forsaken the earth. In this sense some take *ver. 11.* There are those even among God's professing people, that say, How doth God know? Sure all things are left to blind fortune, and not disposed of by an all-seeing God. Some of the heathen, upon such a remark as this, have asked, *Quis putet esse Deos?* (2.) Tho' the psalmist's feet were not thus far gone, as to question God's omniscience; yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, and to say, *ver. 13. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and have to no purpose washed my hands in innocency.* See here what it is to be religious, it is to cleanse our hearts in the first place, by repentance and regeneration, and then to wash our hands in innocency, by an universal reformation of our lives. It is not in vain to do this; not in vain to serve God and keep his ordinances; but good men have been sometimes tempted to say, it is in vain, and that religion is a thing that there is nothing to be got by, because they see wicked people in prosperity. But however the thing may appear now, when the pure in heart, those blessed ones, shall see God, *Mat. v. 8.* they will not say that they have cleansed their hearts in vain.

15. If I say, I will speak thus: behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. 16. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. 18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment? they are utterly consumed with terrors. 20. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O LORD, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

We have seen what a strong temptation the psalmist was in to envy prospering prophaneness; now here we are told how he kept footing, and got the victory.

1. He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, *ver. 15.* He got the victory by degrees; and this was the first point he gained, he was ready to say, *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain:* And thought he had reason to say it, but he kept his mouth with this consideration, *If I say, I will speak thus: behold, I should myself revolt and apostatize from, and so give the greatest offence imaginable, to the generation of thy children.* Observe here, (1.) Tho' he thought amiss, he took care not to utter that evil thought which he had conceived. Note, It is bad to think ill, but it is worse to speak it, for that is giving the evil thought an imprimatur; it is allowing it, giving consent to it, and publishing it for the infection of others: But it is a good sign we repent of the evil imagination of the heart, if we suppress it, and the error remaineth with ourselves. If therefore thou hast been so foolish as to think evil, be so wise as to lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and let it go no further, *Prov. xxx. 32. If I say, I will speak thus.* Observe, tho' his corrupt heart made this inference from the prosperity of the wicked, yet he did not mention it to those about him, till he had debated within himself, whether it were fit to be mentioned or no. Note, We

No. xliii.

must think twice before we speak once; both because some things may be thought, which yet may not be spoken, and because the second thoughts may correct the mistakes of the first. (2.) The reason why he would not speak it, was for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. Note, 1. There is a people in the world that are the generation of God's children, a set of men that hear and love God as their father. (2.) We must be very careful not to say or do any thing which may justly offend any of these little ones, *Mat. xviii. 6.* especially that may offend the generation of them, may sadden their hearts, or weaken their hands, or shake their interest. (3.) There is nothing that can give more general offence to the generation of God's children, than to say that we have cleansed our heart in vain, or that it is vain to serve God, for there is nothing more contrary to their universal sentiment and experience, nor any thing that grieves them more than to hear God thus reflected on. (4.) Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked, do in effect quit the tents of God's children.

2. He foresaw the ruin of wicked people; and by this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it. Because he durst not speak what he had thought, for fear of giving offence, he began to consider whether he had any good reason for that thought, *ver. 16.* I endeavoured to understand the meaning of this unaccountable dispensation of providence; but it was too painful for me, I could not conquer it by the strength of my own reasoning; it is a problem, not to be solved by the meer light of nature, for if there were not another life after this, we could not fully reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the justice of God; but, *ver. 17.* He went into the sanctuary of God, he applied himself to his devotions, meditated upon the attributes of God, and the things revealed which belong to us, and to our children; he consulted the scriptures, and the priests lips who attend the sanctuary; he prayed to God to make this matter plain to him, and to help him over this difficulty; and at length he understood the wretched end of wicked people, which he plainly foresaw to be such, that even in the height of their prosperity, they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin. Note, 1. There are many great things, and needful to be known, which will not be known otherwise than by going into the sanctuary of God, by the word and prayer. That therefore must be the resort of a tempted soul. 2. We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgment; particularly we must judge by the end; all is well that ends well, everlastingly well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlastingly ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable.

1. The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain; the high places in which providence sets them are slippery places, *ver. 18.* Where they cannot long keep footing; but when they offer to climb higher, that very attempt will be the occasion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm ground, it is not built upon God's favour or his promise; and they have not the satisfaction of feeling any firm ground it has.

2. Their destruction is sure and sudden, and very great. This cannot be meant of any temporal destruction, for they were supposed to spend all their days in wealth, and their death itself had no bands in it, in a moment they go down to the grave, so that even that could scarce be called their destruction; it must therefore be meant of eternal destruction on the other side death; hell and destruction. They flourish for a time, but are undone for ever. (1.) Their ruin is sure and inevitable; he speaks of it as a thing done; they are cast down, for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted: *Thou castest them down.* It is destruction from the Almighty, *Joel i. 15.* from the glory of his power, *2 Thes. i. 9.* Who can support those whom God will cast down, whom God will lay load upon? (2.) It is swift and sudden; their damnation slumbers not; for how are they brought into desolation as in a moment? *ver. 19.* It is easily effected, and will be a mighty surprise to themselves and all about them. (3.) It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total, final ruin, they are utterly consumed with terrors. It is the misery of the damned, that the terrors of the Almighty whom they have made their enemy, fasten upon their guilty consciences, which can neither shelter themselves from them, nor strengthen themselves under them; and therefore not their being, but their bliss must needs be utterly consumed by them; not the least degree of comfort or hope remains to them; the higher they were lifted up in their prosperity, the sooner will their fall be when they are cast down into destructions, (for the word is plural) and suddenly brought into desolation.

3. Their prosperity is therefore not to be envied at all, but despised rather; *quod erat demonstrandum*, *ver. 20.* As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, or when they awake (as some read it) thou shalt despise their image, their shadow, and make it to vanish. In the day of the great judgment (so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it) when they are awaked out of their graves, thou shalt in wrath despise their image; for they shall

shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt. See here (1.) What their prosperity now is, it is but an image, a vain shew, a fashion of the world that passeth away; it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a meer shadow; not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream, which may please us a little while we are asleep, yet even then it disturbs our repose; but how pleasing soever it is, it is all but a cheat, all false, when we awake we find it so: A hungry man *dreams he eats, but he wakes, and his soul is empty*, Isa. xxix. 8. A man is never the more rich or honourable for dreaming he is so: Who therefore will envy a man the pleasure of a dream? (2.) What will be the issue of it; God will awake to judgment, to plead his own and his people's injured cause; they shall be made to awake out of the sleep of their carnal security, and then God shall despise their image, *i. e.* He shall make it appear to all the world how despicable it is; so that the righteous shall laugh at them, *Psal. lii. 6, 7.* How did God despise that rich man's image, when he said, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, Luke xii. 19, 20. We ought to be of God's mind, for his judgment is according to the truth; and not to admire and envy that which he despiseth, and will despise; for sooner or later he will bring all the world to be of one mind.

21. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. 22. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. 23. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. 24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. 26. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 27. For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Behold Samson's riddle again unriddled, *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness*; for we have here an account of the good improvement which the psalmist made of that fore temptation with which he had been assaulted, and by which he was almost overcome. He that stumbles and doth not fall, by recovering himself takes so much the longer steps forwards: It was so with the psalmist here; divers good lessons he learned from his temptation, he struggles with it, and his victories over it. Nor would God suffer his people to be tempted, if his grace was not sufficient for them, not only to save them harmless, but to make them gainers by it; even this shall work for good.

1. He learned to think very humbly of himself, and to abase, and accuse himself before God, *ver. 21, 22.* he reflects with shame upon the disorder and danger he was in, and the vexation he gave himself by entertaining the temptation, and parlying with it, *My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins*, as one afflicted with the acute pain of the stone in the region of the kidneys. If ill thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he doth not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but they are grievous and painful to him; temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, *2 Cor. xii. 7.* This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any other; where it constantly rests, it is the *rottenness of the bones*, Prov. xiv. 30. where it doth but occasionally come, it is the pricking of the reins. Fretfulness is a corruption that is its own correction.

Now in the reflection upon it, (1.) He owns it was his folly thus to vex himself; so foolish was I to be my own tormentor. Let peevish people thus reproach themselves for, and shame themselves out of their discontents; what a fool am I thus to make myself uneasy without a cause! (2.) He owns it was his ignorance to vex himself at this; so ignorant of that which I might have known, and which if I had known it aright, would have been sufficient to have silenced the fret. I was as a beast, Behemoth, a great beast, before thee: Beasts mind present things only, and never look before at what is to come; and so did I. If I had not been a great fool, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to have prevailed over me so far: What! to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity! to be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them! so foolish was I. Note, If good men do at any time, through the surprize and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act, amiss, when they see their error they will reflect upon it with sorrow and shame, and self-abhorrence; will call themselves fools for it, *Surely I am more brutish than any man*, Prov. xxx. 2. Job xlii. 5, 6. Thus David, *2 Sam. xxiv. 10.*

2. He took occasion from hence to own his dependence and obligations to the grace of God, *ver. 23.* Nevertheless, as foolish as I am, I am continually with thee, and in thy favour, *thou hast holden me by my right hand.* This may refer either (1.) To the care God had taken of him, and his kindness he had shewed all along from his beginning hitherto. He had said in the hour of temptation, *ver. 14.* All the day long have I been plagued, but here he corrects himself for that passionate complaint, tho' God has chastened me, he has not cast me off, notwithstanding all the crosses of my life, *I have been continually with thee*, I have had thy presence with me, and thou hast been nigh unto me in all that which I have called upon thee for; and therefore, tho' perplexed, yet not in despair. Tho' God has sometimes written bitter things against me, yet he has still *holden me by my right hand*, both to keep me that I should not desert him, or fly off from him, and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burthens, or losing my way in the wildernesses thro' which I have walked. If we have been kept in the way with God, kept close to our duty, and upheld in our integrity, we must own ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for our preservation; *Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto.* And if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or, (2.) To the late experience he had had of the power of divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation, and bringing him off a conqueror; I was foolish and ignorant, and yet thou hast had compassion on me and taught me, *Heb. v. 2.* and kept me under thy protection; for the unworthiness of man is no bar to the free grace of God. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, not to our own wisdom, for we are foolish and ignorant, but to the gracious presence of God with us, and the prevalency of Christ's intercession for us that our faith may not fail. *My feet were almost gone*, and they had quite gone past recovery, but that thou hast holden me by my right hand, and so kept me from falling.

3. He encouraged himself to hope, that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work, would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as St Paul doth, *2 Tim. iv. 18.* I am now upheld by thee, therefore *thou shalt guide me with thy counsel*; leading me as thou hast done hitherto by many a difficult step: And being now continually with thee, *thou shalt afterwards receive me to glory*, *ver. 24.* This compleats the happiness of the saints, so that they have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of sinners. Note, 1. All those who commit themselves to God's conduct, he will guide with his counsel, with the counsel both of his word and of his Spirit, the best counsellors. The psalmist had like to have paid dear for following his own counsels in this temptation, and therefore resolves, for the future, to take God's advice, which shall never be wanting to those that duly seek it with a resolution to follow it. 2. All those that are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world, shall be received to his glory in another world. If we make God's glory in us the end we aim at, he will make our glory with him the end we shall for ever be happy in. Upon this consideration, let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness: If God direct us in the way of our duty, and prevent our turning aside out of it, he will afterwards, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to his kingdom and glory; the believing hopes and prospects of which, will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some threatening temptations.

4. He was hereby quickened to cleave the closer to God, and very much confirmed and comforted in the choice he had made of him, *ver. 25, 26.* his thoughts here dwell with delight upon his own happiness in God, as much greater than the happiness of the ungodly that prospered in the world. He saw little reason to envy them what they had in the creature, when he found how much more and better, surer and sweeter comforts he had in the Creator, and what cause he had to please himself with that. He had complained of his afflictions, *ver. 14.* but this makes them very light and easy, *All is well, if God be mine.* We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul towards God, and its repose in him, as that to a godly man really, which the prosperity of a worldly man is to him in conceit and imagination. *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* There is scarce a verse in all the psalms more expressive than this of the pious and devout affections of a soul to God; here it soars up towards him, follows hard after him, and yet at the same time has an entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

(1.) It is here supposed, that God alone is the felicity and chief good of man. He, and none but he, that made the soul can make it happy; there is none in heaven, none in earth that can pretend to do it but he.

(2.) Here are expressed the workings and breathings of a soul towards God accordingly. If God be our felicity,

(1.) Then we must have him; whom have I but thee? we must chuse him, and make sure to ourselves an interest in him. What will it avail us that he is the felicity of souls, if he be not the felicity

felicity of our souls, and if we do not by a lively faith make him ours, by joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant?

(2.) Then our desire must be towards him, and our delight in him; the word signifies both, we must delight in what we have of God, and desire what we yet further hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God, but they must all terminate in him; desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him; this includes all our prayers, *Lord, give us thyself*; as that includes all the promises, *I will be to them a God. The desire of our souls is to thy name.*

(3.) We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other. (1.) *There is none in heaven but thee*, none to seek to, or trust in, none to court, or covet acquaintance with but thee. God is in himself more glorious than any celestial being, *Psal. lxxxix. 6.* and must be in our eyes infinitely more desirable. Excellent beings there are in heaven, but God only can make us happy: His favour is infinitely more to us than the refreshment of the dews of heaven, or the benign influence of the stars of heaven; more than the friendship of the saints in heaven, or the good offices of the angels there. (2.) *I desire none on earth beside thee*; not only none in heaven, a place at a distance, which we have but little acquaintance with, but none on earth neither, where we have many friends, and where much of our present interest and concern lies. Earth carries away the desires of the most of men, and yet none on earth, no persons, no things, no possessions, no delights that I desire besides thee, or with thee, in comparison or competition with thee, we must desire nothing besides God, but what we desire for him; (*nil præter te, nisi propter te*) nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without, so that it be made up in him. We must desire nothing besides God as needful to be a partner with him, in making us happy.

(4.) Then we must repose our selves in God with an entire satisfaction, *ver. 26.* Observe here, (1.) Great distress and trouble supposed, *My flesh and my heart fails.* Note, Others have experienced, and we must expect the failing both of flesh and heart. The body will fail by sickness, age, and death, and that which touches the bone and the flesh, touches us in a tender part, that part of ourselves which we have been but too fond of; when the flesh fails, the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct, and courage, and comfort fails. (2.) Sovereign relief provided in this distress; but *God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Note, Gracious souls in their greatest distresses rest upon God as their spiritual strength, and their eternal portion. (1.) *He is the strength of my heart*; the rock of my heart, a firm foundation which will bear my weight, and not sink under it. God the strength of my heart; I have found him so, I do so still, and hope ever to find him so. In the distress supposed, he had put the case of a double failure, both flesh and heart fail, but in the relief he fastens on a single support, he leaves out the flesh and the consideration of that, it is enough that God is *the strength of his heart.* He speaks as one careless of the body, let that fail, there is no remedy, but concerned about the soul, to be *strengthened in the inner man.* (2.) He is my portion for ever; he will not only support me while I am here, but make me happy when I go hence. The saints choose God for their portion, they have him for their portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their portion; a portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts.

5. He was fully convinced of the miserable estate of all wicked people: This he learned in the sanctuary upon this occasion, and he would never forget it, *ver. 27. Lo, they that are far from thee*, in a state of distance and estrangement, that desire the Almighty to depart from them, they shall certainly perish; so shall their doom be, they choose to be far from God, and they shall be far from him for ever; thou shalt justly destroy all them that go a-whoring from thee, *i. e.* all apostates that in profession have been betrothed to God, but forsake him, their duty to him, and their communion with him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. The doom is severe, no less than perishing, and being destroyed: It is universal, they shall all be destroyed without exception; it is certain, thou hast destroyed, it is as sure to be done, as if done already; and the destruction of some, is an earnest of the perdition of all ungodly men. God himself undertakes to do it, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall; thou, tho' infinite in goodness, yet wilt reckon for thine injured honour, and abused patience, and wilt destroy them that go a-whoring from thee.

6. He was mightily encouraged to cleave to God, and to confide in him, *ver. 28. If they that are far from God shall perish*, then (1.) Let this oblige us to communion with God. If it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, then it is good, very good, the chief good, that good for a man in this life, which he should most carefully pursue and secure: It is best for me to draw near to God, and to have God draw near to me; the original may take in both: *But for my part* (so I would read it) *the approach of God is good for me.* Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us, and it is the happy meeting that makes the bliss. Here is a great truth laid down, that it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the

application, it is good for me. Those are wise who know what is good for themselves; why, faith he, (and every good man agrees with him in it) *It is good for me to draw near to God*; it is my duty, it is my interest. (2.) Let us therefore live in a continual dependence upon him; *I have put my trust in the Lord God*, and will never go a-whoring from him after any creature-confidences. If wicked men, notwithstanding all their prosperity, shall perish and be destroyed, then let us trust in the Lord God, in him, not in them, (see *Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4, 5.*) in him, and not in our worldly prosperity; let us trust in God, and neither fret at them, nor be afraid of them; let us trust in him for a better portion than theirs is.

(3.) While we do so, let us not doubt but that we shall have occasion to praise his name. Let us trust in the Lord, that we may declare all his works. Note, Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God, shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

P S A L M LXXIV.

*This psalm doth so particularly describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, by Nebuchadnezzar and the army of the Chaldeans, and can so hardly be applied to any other event we meet with in the Jewish history, that interpreters incline to think, either it was penned by David, or Asaph in David's time, with a prophetic reference to that sad event; which yet is not so probable; or, that it was penned by another Asaph, that lived at the time of the captivity, or by Jeremiah (for it is of a piece with his lamentations) or some other prophet, and after the return out of captivity, was delivered to the sons of Asaph, who were called by his name, for the publick service of the church: And that was the most eminent family of the singers in Ezra's time. See *Ezr. ii. 41.—iii. 10. Neh. xi. 17, 22.—xii. 35, 46.* The deplorable case of the people of God at that time is here spread before the Lord, and left with him. The prophet in the name of the church (1.) Puts in complaining pleas of the miseries they suffered, for the quickning of their desires in prayer, *ver. 1—11.* (2.) He puts in comfortable pleas for the encouraging of their faith in prayer, *ver. 12—17.* (3.) He concludes with divers petitions to God for deliverances, *ver. 18—23.* In singing it we must be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and may apply it to any present distresses or desolations of any part of the christian church.*

¶ Maschil of Asaph.

1. **O** GOD, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? 2. Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old: the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed, this mount Zion wherein thou hast dwelt. 3. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations: even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. 4. Thine enemies rore in the midst of thy congregations: they set up their ensigns for signs. 5. A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. 6. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once, with axes and hammers. 7. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground. 8. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land. 9. We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. 10. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? 11. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

This psalm is intituled Maschil, a psalm to give instruction, for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction in general it gives us, That when we are upon any account in distress, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so.

Three things they here complain of,

1. The displeasure of God against them, as that which was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instrument of their trouble, who they knew could have no power against them, unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were

were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Observe, the liberty they take to expostulate with God, *ver. 1.* And we hope not too great a liberty, for Christ himself upon the cross cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* So the church here, *O God, why hast thou forsaken us for ever?* Here they speak according to their present dark and melancholy apprehensions; for otherwise, *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid,* Rom. xi. 1. The people of God must not think that because they are cast down, they are therefore cast off; that because men cast them off, therefore God doth; and that because he seems to cast them off for a time, therefore they are really cast off for ever; yet this expostulation intimates, that they dreaded God's casting them off more than any thing, that they desired to be owned of him, whatever they suffered from men; and were desirous to know wherefore he thus contended with them, *Why doth thine anger smoke? i. e.* Why doth it rise up to such a degree, that all about us take notice of it, and ask, *What meaneth the heat of this great anger?* Deut. xxix. 24. Compare *ver. 20.* where the anger of the Lord and his jealousy are said to smoke against sinners.

Observe what they plead with God, now they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath.

(1.) They plead their relation to him, we are the sheep of thy pasture, the sheep wherewith thou hast been pleased to stock thy pasture, thy peculiar people whom thou art pleased to set a-part for thyself, and design for thine own glory. That the wolves worry the sheep is not strange, but was ever any shepherd thus displeased at his own sheep? Remember, we are thy congregation, *ver. 2.* incorporated by thee, and for thee, and devoted to thy praise; we are the rod, or tribe, of thine inheritance, whom thou hast been pleased to claim a special property in, above other people, *Deut. xxxii. 9.* and from whom thou hast received the rents and issues of praise and worship more than from the neighbour nations. Nay, a man's inheritance may lie at a great distance, but we are pleading for mount Sion wherein thou hast dwelt, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight and residence, thy demesne and mansion.

(2.) They plead the great things God had done for them, and the vast expence he had been at upon them. It is thy congregation which thou hast not only made with a word's speaking, but purchased of old, by many miracles of mercy, when they were first formed into a people; it is thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed when they were sold into servitude; God gave Egypt to ruin for their ransom, gave men for them, and people for their life, *Isa. xliii. 3, 4.* Now, Lord, wilt thou now abandon a people that cost thee so dear, and has been so dear to thee? And if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, was an encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to hope that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood; but the people of his purchase, shall be for ever the people of his praise.

(3.) They plead the calamitous state that they were in, *ver. 3.* Lift up thy feet, *i. e.* come with speed to repair the desolations that are made in thy sanctuary, which otherwise will be perpetual and irreparable. It has been sometimes said, that the divine vengeance strikes with iron hands, yet it comes with leaden feet; and then those who wait for the day of the Lord cry, *Lord, lift up thy feet.* Exalt thy steps, *i. e.* magnify thyself in the outgoing of thy providence. When the desolations of the sanctuary have continued long, we are tempted to think they will be perpetual; but it is a temptation; for God will avenge his own elect, will avenge them speedily, tho' he bear long with their oppressors and persecutors.

2. They complain of the outrage and cruelty of their enemies; not so much, no not at all, of what they had done to the prejudice of their secular interest; here are no complaints of the burning of their cities, and ravaging of their country, but only what they had done against the sanctuary, and the synagogue. The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts, and affect us more than any worldly concern whatsoever: The desolation of God's house should grieve us more than the desolation of our own houses, for the matter is not great what comes of us and our families in this world, provided God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done.

He complains of the desolations of the sanctuary, as Daniel, *chap. ix. 17.* The temple at Jerusalem was the dwelling-place of God's name, and therefore the sanctuary or holy place, *ver. 7.* In this the enemies did wickedly, *ver. 3.* for they destroyed it in downright contempt of God, and affront to him.

(1.) They roared in the midst of God's congregations; there where God's faithful people attended on him with an humble, reverent silence, or softly speaking, they roared in a riotous, revelling manner, being very jovial that they had made themselves masters of that sanctuary, which they had sometimes heard formidable things of. (2.) They set up their ensigns for signs; the banners of their army they set up in the temple, (Israel's strongest castles as long as they kept close to God) as trophies of their victory: There where the signs of God's presence used to be, now the enemy had set up their ensigns. This daring defiance of God

and his power, touched his people in a tender part. (3.) They took a pride in destroying the carved work of the temple. As much as formerly men thought it an honour to lend an hand to the building of the temple, and he was thought famous that helped to fell timber for that work, so much now they valued themselves upon their agency in destroying it, *ver. 5, 6.* Thus, as when time was, those were celebrated for wise men that did service to religion, so now they are cried up for wits that help to run it down. Some read it thus, *They shew themselves, as one that lift up axes on high in a thicket of trees,* for so do they break down the carved work of the temple; they make no more scruple of breaking down the rich wainscot of the temple, than woodcutters do of hewing trees in the forest; such indignation have they at the sanctuary, that the most curious carving that ever was seen, is beaten down by the common soldiers without any regard had to it, either as a dedicated thing, or as a piece of exquisite art. (4.) They set fire to it, and so violated, or destroyed it to the ground, *ver. 7.* The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, that stately, costly, fabrick, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 19.* And the Romans left not there one stone upon another, *Matt. xxiv. 2.* rasing it, rasing it even to the foundations, till Zion, the holy mountain, was, by Titus Vespasian, plowed as a field.

(2.) He complains of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, which before the captivity were in use, tho' much more after. There God's word was read and expounded, and his name praised and called upon, without altars or sacrifices: These also they had a spite to, *ver. 8.* Let us destroy them together; not only the temple, but all the places of religious worship, and the worshippers with them, *Let us destroy them together,* let them be consumed in the same flame: pursuant to this impious resolve, they burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land, and laid them all waste. So great was their rage against religion, that the religious houses, because religious, were all levelled with the ground, that God's worshippers might not glorify God, and edify one another by meeting in solemn assemblies.

3. The great aggravation of all these calamities, was, that they had no prospect at all of relief, nor could they foresee an end of them, *ver. 9.* We see our enemy's sign set up in the sanctuary, but we see not our signs, none of the tokens of God's presence, no hopeful indications of approaching deliverance, *there is no more any prophet* to tell us how long the trouble will last, and when things concerning us shall have an end; that the hope of an issue at last may support us under our troubles. In the captivity in Babylon they had prophets, and had been told how long the captivity should continue, but the day was cloudy and dark, *Ezek. xxxiv. 12.* and they had not as yet the comfort of these gracious discoveries; God spoke once, yea, twice, good words and comfortable words, but they perceived them not. Observe, They do not complain, We see not our armies, there are no men of war to command our forces, nor any to go forth with our hosts; but no prophets, none to tell us how long.

This puts them upon expostulating with God, as delaying, (1.) To assert his honour, *ver. 10.* How long shall the adversary reproach and blaspheme thy name? In the desolations of the sanctuary our chief concern should be for the glory of God, that that may not be injured by the blasphemies of those who persecute his people for his sake, because they are his; and therefore our enquiry should be not how long shall we be troubled, but how long shall God be blasphemed? (2.) To exert his power, *ver. 11.* Why withdrawest thou thy hand, and dost not stretch it out to deliver thy people, and destroy thine enemies? Pluck it out of thy bosom, and be not as a man astonished, as a man that cannot save, or will not, *Jer. xiv. 9.* When the power of enemies is most threatening, it is comfortable to fly to the power of God.

12. For God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13. Thou didst divide the sea, by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. 14. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 15. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers. 16. The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. 17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.

The lamenting church fastens upon something here which she calls to mind, and therefore hath she hope, as *Lam. iii. 21.* and with which she encourageth herself, and silenceth her own complaints.

Two things quiet the minds of those that are here sorrowing for the solemn assembly.

1. That God is the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, *ver. 12. God is my King of old.* This comes in both as a plea in prayer to God, *Psal. xlv. 4. Thou art my King, O God,* and as a prop to their own faith and hope, to encourage themselves to expect deliverance, considering the *days of old*, *Psal. lxxvii. 5.* The church speaks as a complex body, the same in every age, and therefore calls God my King, my King of old, or from antiquity, *i. e.* he has of old put himself into that relation to them, and has appeared and acted for them in that relation; as Israel's King he has wrought salvation in the midst of the nations of the earth; for what he has done in the government of the world, has tended towards the salvation of his church.

Several things are here mentioned which God had done for his people as their king of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him, and depend upon him. (1.) He had divided the sea before them when they came out of Egypt, not by the strength of Moses or his rod, but by his own strength: and he that could do that, could do any thing. (2.) He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians; Pharaoh was the leviathan, the Egyptians were the dragons, fierce and cruel. Observe, (1.) The victory obtained over these enemies, God broke their heads, baffled their politicks: when Israel, the more they were afflicted by them, the more they multiplied, crushed their powers, tho' complicated, ruined their country by ten plagues, and at last drowned them all in the Red sea; *This is Pharaoh and all his multitude*, *Ezek. xxxi. ult.* It was the Lord's doing, none but he could do it, and he did with a strong hand and outstretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head. (2.) The improvement of this victory for the encouragement of the church. *Thou gavest him to be meat to the people of Israel now going to inhabit the wilderness.* The spoil of the Egyptians enriched them; they stripped their slain, and so got the Egyptians arms and weapons, as before they had got their jewels. Or rather, this providence was meat to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. It was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of. Note, The breaking of the heads of the church's enemies, is the joy and strength of the hearts of the church's friends. Thus the companions make a banquet even of leviathan, *Job xli. 6.* (3.) God had both ways altered the course of nature, both in fetching streams out of the rock, and turning streams into rock, *ver. 15.* (1.) He had dissolved the rock into waters, *Thou didst bring out the fountain and the flood* (so some read it) and every one knows whence it was brought, out of the rock, out of the flinty rock. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially be remembered, that that rock was Christ, and the waters out of it spiritual drink. (2.) He had congealed the waters into rock. *Thou driest up mighty, rapid, rivers*, Jordan, particularly, at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things, could now deliver his oppressed people, and break the yoke of the oppressors, as he had done formerly; nay, he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

2. That the God of Israel is the God of nature, *ver. 16, 17.* It is he that orders the regular successions and revolutions, (1.) Of day and night; he is the Lord of all time; the evening and the morning are of his ordaining; it is he that opens the eyelids of the morning light, and draws the curtains of the evening shadow. *He hath prepared the moon and the sun;* (so some read it) the two great lights, to rule by day and by night alternately. The preparing of them, notes their constant readiness and exact observance of their time, which they never miss a moment. (2.) Of summer and winter; thou hast appointed all the bounds of the earth, and the different climates of its several regions, for thou hast made summer and winter, both frigid and torrid zone: or, rather, the constant revolutions of the year, and its several seasons. Herein we are to acknowledge God, from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived; but how doth this come in here? 1. He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve this course of nature by the diurnal and annual motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with him nothing is impossible, nor any difficulties or oppositions insuperable. 2. He that is faithful to his covenant with the day and with the night, and preserves the ordinances of heaven inviolable, will certainly make good his promise to his people, and never cast off those whom he has chosen, *Jer. xxxi. 35, 36.—xxxiii. 20, 21.* His covenant with Abraham and his seed is as firm as that with Noah and his sons, *Gen. viii. 21.* 3. Day and night, summer and winter, being counterchanged in the course of nature throughout all the borders of the earth, we can expect no other, but that trouble and peace, prosperity and adversity should be in like manner counterchanged in all the borders of the church. We have as much reason to expect affliction, as to expect night and winter. But we have then no more reason to despair

No. xliii.

of the return of comfort, than we have to despair of day and summer.

18. Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. 19. O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked, forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. 20. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. 21. O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. 23. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee, increaseth continually.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, most earnestly begs that God would appear for them against their enemies, and put an end to their present troubles; and to encourage his own faith, he interests God in this matter, *ver. 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.* This we may be sure he will do, for he is jealous for his own honour; whatever is his own cause he will plead it with a strong hand, will appear against those that oppose it, and with and for those that cordially espouse it. He will arise and plead it, tho' for a time he seems to neglect it, he will stir up himself, will manifest himself, will do his own work in his own time. Note, The cause of religion is God's own cause, and he will certainly plead it.

Now to make it out that the cause is God's, he pleads;

1. That the persecutors are God's sworn enemies; Lord, they have not only abused us, but they have been, and are, abusive to thee; what is done against us for thy sake, doth by consequence reflect upon thee. But that is not all, they have directly and immediately reproached thee, and blasphemed thy name, *ver. 18.* This was that which they roared in the sanctuary, they triumphed as if they had now got the mastery of the God of Israel, of whom they had heard such great things. As nothing grieves the saints more, than to hear God's name blasphemed, so nothing encourageth them more to hope that God will appear against their enemies, than when they are arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as to reproach God himself; this fills the measure of their sins apace, and hastens their ruin. The psalmist insists much upon this: We dare not answer their reproaches, Lord, do thou answer them. Remember that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name, *ver. 18.* and that still the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. Observe the character of those that reproach God, they are foolish. As atheism is folly, *Psal. xiv. 1.* so is profaneness and blasphemy no less so. Perhaps, they are cried up for the wits of the age that ridicule religion and sacred things: But really they are the greatest fools, and will shortly be made to appear so before all the world. And yet see their malice, they reproach God daily, as constantly as his faithful worshippers pray to him, and praise him. Their impudence; they do not hide their blasphemous thoughts in their own bosoms, but proclaim them with a loud voice: *Forget not the voice of thine enemies*, *ver. 23.* And this with a daring defiance of divine justice, they rise up against thee, and by their blasphemies even wage war with heaven, and take up arms against the Almighty: Their noise and tumult ascendeth continually (so some) as the cry of Sodom came up before God calling for vengeance, *Gen. xviii. 21.* It increaseth continually, (so we read it) they grow worse and worse, and are hardened in their impieties by their successes. Now Lord, remember this, do not forget it; God needs not to be put in remembrance by us of what he has to do, but thus we must shew our concern for his honour, and believe that he will vindicate us.

2. That the persecuted are his covenant people.

(1.) See what distress they are in, they are fallen into the hands of the multitude of the wicked, *ver. 19. How are they increased that trouble them?* There is no standing before an enraged multitude, especially as these, armed with power; and as they are numerous, so they are barbarous, the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. The land of the Chaldeans, where there was none of the light of the knowledge of the true God, (tho' otherwise it was famed for learning and arts) was indeed a dark place, the inhabitants of it were alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, and therefore they were cruel; where there was no true divinity, there was scarce to be found common humanity; they were especially cruel to the people of God; certainly they have no knowledge who eat them up, *Psal. xiv. 4.* They are oppressed, *ver. 21.* because they are poor, and unable

to right themselves, they are oppressed, and so impoverished and made poor.

(2.) See what reason they had to hope that God would appear for their relief, and not suffer them to be always thus trampled upon. Observe how the psalmist pleads with God for them, (1.) It is thy turtle-dove that is ready to be swallowed up by the multitude of the wicked, *ver. 19.* The church is a dove for harmlessness and mildness, innocency and inoffensiveness, purity and fruitfulness; a dove for mournfulness in a day of distress; a turtle-dove for fidelity, and the constancy of love; turtle-doves and pigeons were the only fowl that were offered in sacrifice to God: Shall thy turtle-dove that is true to thee, and devoted to thine honour, be delivered, its life, and soul, and all, into the *hand of the multitude of the wicked*, to whom it will soon become an easy and acceptable prey? Lord, it will be thine honour to help the weak, especially to help thine own. (2.) It is *the congregation of thy poor*, and they are not the less thine for their being poor, for God hath *chosen the poor of the world*, Jam. ii. 5. But they have the more reason to expect thou wilt appear for them because they are many, it is the congregation of thy poor; let them not be abandoned and forgotten for ever. (3.) They are in covenant with thee; and wilt thou not *have respect unto the covenant*, *ver. 20.* Wilt thou not perform the promises thou hast in thy covenant made to them? wilt thou not own them whom thou hast brought into the bond of the covenant? When God delivers his people, it is *in remembrance of his covenant*, Lev. xxvi. 42. Lord, tho' we are unworthy to be respected, yet have respect to the covenant. (4.) They trust in thee, and boast of their relation to thee, and expectations from thee; O let not them return ashamed of their hope, *ver. 21.* as they will be if they be disappointed. (5.) If thou deliver them, they will praise thy name, and give thee the glory of their deliverance. Appear, Lord, for those that will praise thy name, against those that blaspheme it.

P S A L M LXXV.

*Tho' this psalm is attributed to Asaph in the title, yet it doth so exactly agree with David's circumstances at his coming to the crown after the death of Saul, that most interpreters apply it to that juncture, and suppose that either Asaph penned it in the person of David, as his poet-laureat, probably, the substance of the psalm was some speech which David made to a convention of the states, at his accession to the government, and that Asaph turned it into verse, and published it in a poem, for the better spreading of it among the people; or that David penned it, and delivered it to Asaph as precentor of the temple. In this psalm, (1.) David returns God thanks for bringing him to the throne, *ver. 1, 9.* (2.) He promiseth to lay out himself for the publick good, in the use of the power God had given him, *ver. 2, 3, 10.* (3.) He checks the insolence of those that opposed his coming to the throne, *ver. 4, 5.* (4.) He fetcheth a reason for all this from God's sovereign dominion in the affairs of the children of men, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* In singing this psalm, we must give to God the glory of all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, believing that they are all according to his counsel, and he will make them all to work for the good of his church.*

¶ To the chief musician, Al-taschith, A psalm or song of Asaph.

1. **U**NTO thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare. 2. When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly. 3. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. 4. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn. 5. Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck.

In these verses,

1. The psalmist gives to God the praise of his advancement to honour and power, and other the great things he had done for him and for his people Israel, *ver. 1.* *Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks*, for all the favours thou hast bestowed upon us; and again, *unto thee do we give thanks*; for our thank-

givings must be often repeated; did we not often pray for mercy when we were in pursuit of it, and shall we think it will suffice once or twice to give thanks when we have obtained it? Not only I do give thanks, but we do; I and all my friends. If we share with others in their mercies, we must join with them in their praises, unto thee, O God, the author of our mercies; and we will not give that glory to the instruments which is due to thee only. For that thy name is near, *i. e.* that the compleat accomplishment of thy promise made to David is not far off; thy wondrous works which thou hast already done for him do declare. Note, 1. There are many works which God doth for his people, that may truly be called wondrous works, out of the common course of providence, and quite beyond our expectation. 2. These wondrous works declare the nearness of his name, they shew that he himself is at hand, nigh to us in what we call upon him for; and that he is about to do some great things for his people, in pursuance of his purpose and promise. 3. When God's wondrous works declare the nearness of his name, it is our duty to give him thanks, again and again to give him thanks.

2. He lays himself under an obligation to use his power well, pursuant to the great trust reposed in him, *ver. 2.* *When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly.* Here he takes it for granted, that God would in due time perfect that which concerned him, that tho' the congregation was very slow in gathering to him, and great opposition was made to it, yet at length he should receive it; for what God hath spoken in his holiness, he will perform by his wisdom and power. Being thus in expectation of the mercy, he promiseth to make conscience of his duty; when I am a judge, I will judge, and judge uprightly; not as those that went before me, who either neglected judgment, or, which was worse, perverted it; either did no good with their power, or did hurt. Note, 1. Those that are advanced to posts of honour, must remember they are posts of service, and must set themselves with diligence and application of mind to do the work to which they are called. He doth not say, when I shall receive the congregation, I will take my ease, and take state upon me, and leave the publick business to others, but I will mind it myself. 2. Publick trusts are to be managed with great integrity; they that judge must judge uprightly, according to the rules of justice, without respect of persons.

3. He promiseth himself that his government would be a publick blessing to Israel, *ver. 3.* The present state of the kingdom was very bad, *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved*, and no marvel, when the former reign was so dissolute; all went to wrack and ruin. There was a general corruption of manners for want of putting the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. They were divided one from another for want of centring, as they ought, to do in the government God had appointed. They were all to pieces, two against three, and three against two, crumbled into factions and parties, which was likely to issue in their ruin; but I bear up the pillars of it. Even in Saul's time David did what he could towards the publick welfare, but he hoped when he had himself received the congregation, he should do much more, and should not only prevent the publick ruin, but recover the publick strength and beauty. Now, (1.) See the mischief of parties, they melt and dissolve a land, and the inhabitants of it. (2.) See how much one head many times holds up. The fabric had sunk if David had not held up the pillars of it. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. The world and all the inhabitants of it were dissolved by sin, man's apostasy threatened the destruction of the whole creation; but Christ bore up the pillars of it, he saved the whole world from utter ruin, by saving his people from their sins, and into his hand the administration of the kingdom of providence is committed, for *he upholdeth all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3.

4. He checks those that opposed his government, that were against his accession to it, and obstructed the administration of it, striving to keep up that vice and profaneness which he made it his business to suppress, *ver. 4, 5.* *I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly.* He had said so to them in Saul's time, when he had not power to restrain them, yet he had wisdom and grace to reprove them, and to give them good counsel; tho' they bore themselves high upon the favour of that unhappy prince, he cautioned them not to be too presumptuous. Or rather, he doth now say so to them. As soon as he came to the crown, he issued out a proclamation against vice and profaneness, and here we have the contents of it. (1.) To the simple sneaking sinners, the fools in Israel, that corrupted themselves, to them he said, *Deal not foolishly*; do not act so directly contrary both to your reason and to your interest, as you do, while you walk contrary to the laws God has given Israel, and the promises he has made to David. Christ, the son of David, gives us this counsel, issues out this edict, *Deal not foolishly.* He who is made of God to us wisdom; bids us be wise for ourselves, and not make fools of ourselves. (2.) To the proud daring sinners, the wicked, that set God himself at defiance, he saith, *Lift not up the horn*; brag not of your power and

and prerogatives, persist not in your contumacy and contempt of the government set over you; *lift not up your horn on high*, as tho' you could have what you will, and do what you will; *speaking not with a stiff neck*, in which is an iron finew, that will never bend to the will of God, in the government, for they that will not bend, shall break; they whose necks are stiffened, are so to their own destruction. This is Christ's word of command in his gospel, that *Every mountain will be brought low before him*, Isa. xl. 4. Let not the anti-christian power, with its heads and horns, lift up itself against him, for it shall certainly be broken to pieces; what is said with a stiff neck must be unsaid again with a broken heart, or we are undone. Pharaoh said with a stiff neck, *Who is the Lord?* But God made him know to his cost.

6. For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. 8. For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red: it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. 9. But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

In these verses we have two great doctrines laid down, and two good inferences drawn from them, for the confirmation of what he had before said.

1. Here are two great truths laid down concerning God's government of the world, which we ought to mix faith with, both pertinent to the occasion.

(1.) That from God alone kings receive their power, ver. 6. 7. and therefore to God alone David would give the praise of his advancement; therefore having his power from God he would use it for him, and therefore they were fools that lifted up the horn against him. We see strange revolutions in states and kingdoms, and are surprized at the sudden disgrace of some, and elevation of others; we are all full of such changes when they happen; but here we are directed to look at the author of them, and are here taught where the original of power is, and whence promotion comes. Whence comes preferment to kingdoms, to the sovereignty of them? And whence come preferments in kingdoms, to places of power and trust in them? The former depends not upon the will of the people, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look that are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin right. We are here told (1.) Negatively, which way we are not to look for the fountain of power: *Promotion comes neither from the east nor from the west, nor from the desert*, i. e. neither from the desert on the north of Jerusalem, nor from that on the south; so that the fair gale of preferment is not to be expected to blow from any point of the compass, but only from above, directly from thence. Men cannot gain promotion either by the wisdom or wealth of the children of the east, or by the numerous forces of the isles of the Gentiles that lay westward, or those of Egypt or Arabia that lay south; no concurring smiles of second causes will raise men to preferment without the first cause. The learned bishop Lloyd, (*Serm. in loc.*) gives this gloss upon it: all men took the original of power to be from heaven, but from whom there many knew not; the eastern nations, who were generally given to astrology, took it to come from their stars, especially the sun, their god; no, saith David, it comes neither from the east nor from the west, neither from the rising nor setting of such a planet, or such a constellation, nor from the south, not from the exaltation of the sun, or any star in the mid-heaven; he mentions not the north, because none supposed it to come from thence: or, because the same word that signifies the north, signifies the secret place; and from the secret of God's counsel it doth come; or from the oracle in Zion, which lay on the north-side of Jerusalem. Note, No wind so good as to blow promotion, but as he directs who hath the winds in his fists. (2.) Positively; *God is the judge*, the governor or umpire, when parties contend for the prize, he puts down one, and sets up another, as he sees fit, so as to serve his own purposes, and bring to pass his own counsels. Herein he acts by prerogative, and is not accountable to us for any of these matters; nor is it any damage, danger, or disgrace, that he, who is infinitely wise, holy, and good, has an arbitrary and despotic power to set up and put down, whom, and when, and how he pleaseth. This is a good reason why magistrates should rule for God, as those that must give account to him, because it is by him that kings reign.

(2.) That from God alone all must receive their doom, ver. 8. *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup*, which he puts into the hands of the children of men, a cup of providence, mixed up (as

he thinks fit) of many ingredients; a cup of affliction; the sufferings of Christ are called a cup, Mat. xx. 22. John xviii. 11. The judgments of God upon sinners are *the cup of the Lord's right hand*, Hab. ii. 16. *The wine is red*, noting the wrath of God which is infused into the judgments executed on sinners, and is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. It is red as fire, red as blood, for it burns, it kills. It is full of mixture prepared in wisdom, so as to answer the end: there are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction, when it is put into the hands of God's own people; mixtures of the curse when it is put into the hands of the wicked; it is wine mingled with gall. These vials (1.) Are poured out upon all; see Rev. xv. 7.—xvi. 1. where we read of the angels pouring out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth. Some drops of this wrath may light on good people; when God's judgments are abroad, they have their share in common calamities: but (2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked. The calamity itself is but the vehicle into which the wrath and curse is infused, the top of which has little of the infusion; but the sediment is pure wrath, and that shall fall to the share of sinners; they have the dregs of the cup now in the terrors of conscience; and hereafter in the torments of hell. They shall wring them out, that not a drop of the wrath may be left behind, and they shall drink them, for the curse shall enter into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones. The cup of the Lord's indignation will be to them a cup of trembling, everlasting trembling, Rev. xiv. 10. The wicked man's cup while he prospers in the world, is full of mixture, but the worst is at the bottom. The wicked are reserved unto the day of judgment.

2. Here are two good practical inferences drawn from these great truths, and they are the same purposes of duty that he began the psalm with. (1.) This being so; he will praise God and give him glory for the power to which he had advanced him, ver. 9. *I will declare for ever that which thy wondrous works declare*, ver. 1. He will praise God for his elevation, not only at first while the mercy was fresh, but for ever, so long as he lives; the exaltation of the son of David, will be the subject of the saints everlasting praises. He will give glory to God, not only as his God, but as the God of Jacob, knowing it was for Jacob his servant's sake, and because He loved his people Israel, that he made him king over them. (2.) He will use the power with which he is intrusted for the great ends for which it was put into his hands, ver. 10. as before, ver. 2, 4. According to the duty of the higher powers, (1.) He resolves to be a terror to evil-doers, to humble their pride, and break their power; tho' not all the heads, yet *all the horns of the wicked will I cut off*, with which they push their poor neighbours, I will disable them to do mischief. Thus God promises to raise up carpenters which should *fray the horns of the Gentiles that had scattered Judah and Israel*, Zech. i. 18—21. (2.) He resolves to be a protection and praise to them that do well; *The horns of the righteous shall be exalted*, i. e. they shall be preferred, and put into places of power; and they that are good, and have hearts to do good, shall not want ability and opportunity for it. This agrees with David's resolutions, Psal. ci. 3, &c. And herein David was a type of Christ, who with the breath of his mouth shall slay the wicked, but shall *exalt with honour the horn of the righteous*, Psal. cxii. 9.

P S A L M LXXVI.

This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some great victory obtained by the church over some threatening enemy or other, and designed to grace the triumph. The LXX call it. *A song upon the Assyrians*; from whence many good interpreters conjecture, that it was penned when Sennacherib's army then besieging Jerusalem, was entirely cut off by a destroying angel in Hezekiah's time; and several passages in the psalm are very applicable to that work of wonder: but there was a religious triumph upon occasion of another victory in Jehoshaphat's time, which might as well be the subject of this psalm, 2 Chron. xx. 28. And it might be called a song of Asaph, because always sung by the sons of Asaph. Or, it might be penned by Asaph that lived in David's time, upon occasion of the many triumphs with which God delighted to honour that reign. Upon occasion of this glorious victory, whatever it was, (1.) The psalmist congratulates the happiness of the church in having God so nigh, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) He celebrates the glory of God's power, which this was an illustrious instance of, ver. 4, 5, 6. (3.) He infers from hence what reason all have to fear before him, ver. 7, 8, 9. And (4.) What reason his people have to trust in him, and to pay their vows to him, ver. 10, 11, 12. It is a psalm proper for a thanksgiving-day upon the account of public successes, and not improper at other times, because it is never out.

out of season to glorify God for the great things he has done for his church formerly, especially for the victories of the Redeemer over the powers of darkness, which all those Old Testament victories were types of, at least, those that are celebrated in the psalms.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, A psalm
or song of Asaph.

1. **I**N Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion. 3. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah. 4. Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. 5. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. 6. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

The church is here triumphant, even in the midst of its militant state. The psalmist, in the church's name, triumphs here in God, the centre of all our triumphs.

1. In the revelation God had made of himself to them, *ver. 2.* It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel, that among them God is known, and where he is known, his name will be great. God is known, as he is pleased to make himself known; and they are happy to whom he discovers himself: Happy people that have their land filled with the knowledge of God; happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge. In Judah God was known so as he was not known in other nations, which made the favour the more obliging, that it was distinguishing, *Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20.*

2. In the tokens of God's special presence with them in his ordinances, *ver. 2.* In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was known, and his name was great; but in Salem, in Sion, was his tabernacle and his dwelling-place, there he kept court, there received the homage of his people by their sacrifices, and entertained them by the feasts upon the sacrifices, thither they came to address themselves to him, and thence by his oracles he issued out his orders; there he recorded his name; and of that place he said, *Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.* It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances; but his dwelling-place is a tabernacle, a moveable dwelling; yet a little while is that light with us.

3. In the victories they had obtained over their enemies, *ver. 3.* There brake he the arrows of the bow. Observe how threatening the danger was; tho' Judah and Israel, Salem and Sion, were thus privileged, yet war is raised against them, and the weapons of war are furnished: Here is bow and arrows, shield and sword, and all for battle; but all are broken and rendered useless. And it was done there, (1.) In Judah and Israel, in favour of that people near to God. While the weapons of war were used against other nations, they answered their end, but when turned against that holy nation, they were broken presently. The Chaldee paraphraseth it thus, When the house of Israel did his will, he placed his majesty among them, and there he broke the arrows of the bow; while they kept close to his service, they were great and safe, and every thing went well with them. Or, (2.) In the tabernacle and dwelling-place in Sion, there he brake the arrows of the bow; it was done in the field of battle, and yet it is said to be done in the sanctuary, because done in answer to the prayers which there God's people made to him, and in performance of the promises which he there made to them; of both which see that instance, *2 Chron. xx. 5, 14.* Publick successes are owing as much to what is done in the church, as to what is done in the camp.

Now this victory redounded very much,

1. To the immortal honour of Israel's God, *ver. 4.* Thou art, and hast manifested thyself to be more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. (1.) Than the great and mighty ones of the earth in general, who are high, and think themselves firmly fixed like mountains, but are really mountains of prey, oppressive to all about them. It is their glory to destroy; it is thine to deliver. (2.) Than our invaders in particular, when they besieged the cities of Judah, they cast up mounts against them, and raised batteries; but thou art more able to protect us, than they are to annoy us. Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly, it will appear that God is above them.

2. To the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, *ver. 5, 6.* They were stout-hearted, men of great courage and resolution, flushed with their former victories, enraged against Israel, confident of success, they were men of might, robust, and fit for service, they had chariots and horses, which were then greatly valued and trusted to in war, *Psal. xx. 7.* But all this force was of no force, when it was levelled against Jerusalem. (1.)

The stout-hearted have despoiled and disarmed themselves; (so some read it) and when God pleafeth, he can make his enemies to weaken and destroy themselves. They have slept, not the sleep of the righteous, who sleep in Jesus, but their sleep, the sleep of sinners, that shall wake to everlasting shame and contempt. (2.) The men of might are as far to seek for their hands, as the stout-hearted are for their spirit. As the bold men are cowed, so the strong men are lamed, and cannot so much as find their hands, to save their own heads, much less to hurt their enemies. (3.) The chariots and horses may be truly said to be cast into a dead sleep, when their drivers and their riders were so. God did but speak the word, as the God of Jacob that commands deliverances for Jacob, and at his rebuke the chariot and horse were both cast into a dead sleep; when the men were laid dead upon the spot by the destroying angel, the chariot and horse were not at all formidable. See the power and efficacy of God's rebukes. With what pleasure may we Christians apply all this to the advantages we enjoy by the Redeemer! It is thro' him that God is known; it is in him that God's name is great; to him it is owing that God has a tabernacle and a dwelling-place in his church. He it was that vanquished the strong man armed, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly.

7. Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? 8. Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still, 9. When God arose to judgment to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. 10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. 11. Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God; let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. 12. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

This glorious victory with which God had graced and blessed his church, is here made to speak three things.

1. Terror to God's enemies, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* Thou, even thou, art to be feared; thy majesty is to be revered, thy sovereignty to be submitted to, and thy justice to be dreaded by those that have offended thee. Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the great God. (1.) Let all be afraid of his wrath against the daring impiety of sinners; *Who may stand in thy sight from the minute that thou art angry?* If God be a consuming fire, how can chaff and stubble stand before him? tho' his anger be kindled but a little, *Psal. ii. 12.* (2.) Let all be afraid of his jealousy for oppressed innocency, and the injured cause of his own people; *Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven, then when thou didst arise to save all the meek of the earth,* *ver. 8, 9.* and then *the earth feared and was still,* waiting what would be the issue of those glorious appearances of thine. Note, 1. God's people are the meek of the earth, *Zeph. ii. 3.* the quiet in the land, *Psal. xxxv. 20.* that can bear any wrong, but do none. 2. Tho' the meek of the earth are by their meekness exposed to injury, yet God will sooner or later appear for their salvation, and plead their cause. 3. When God comes to save all the meek of the earth, he will cause judgment to be heard from heaven, i. e. He will make the world know that he is angry at the oppressors of his people, and takes what is done against them, as done against himself. The righteous God long seems to keep silence, yet sooner or later he will make judgment to be heard. 4. When God is speaking judgment from heaven, it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence; *The earth feared and was still,* as silence is made by proclamation when the court sits. *Be still, and know that I am God,* *Psal. xlv. 10.* *Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up to judgment,* *Zech. ii. 13.* Those that suppose this psalm to have been penned upon the occasion of the routing of Sennacherib's army, take it for granted, that the descent of the destroying angel who did the execution, was accompanied with thunder, by which God caused judgment to be heard from heaven, and that the earth feared, i. e. there was an earthquake, but it was soon over. But this is altogether uncertain.

2. Comfort to God's people, *ver. 10.* We live in a very angry provoking world, we feel much many times, and are apt to fear more from the wrath of man, which seems boundless. But this is a great comfort to us, (1.) That as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time, he will make it turn to his praise, will bring honour to himself, and serve his own purposes by it: *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee,* not only by the checks given to it, when it shall be forced to confess its own impotency, but even by the losses given to it for a time: The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies, are made to redound to the glory of God and his grace; and the more the heathen rage and plot against the Lord and his anointed, the more will God be praised for setting his king upon his holy

holy hill of Sion in spite of them, *Psal. ii. 1, 6.* When the heavenly hosts make this the matter of their thanksgiving-songs that God has taken to him his great power, and has reigned, tho' the nations were angry, *Rev. xi. 17, 18.* then the wrath of man adds lustre to the praises of God. (2.) That what will not turn to his praise, shall not be suffered to break out; *the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* Men must never permit sin, because they cannot check it when they will; but God can. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he doth to the raging sea. *Hitherto it shall come and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed.* God restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's rage, for he put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his jaws, *Isa. xxxvii. 29.* and tho' he permitted him to talk big, he restrained him from doing what he designed.

3. Duty to all, *ver. 11, 12.* Let all submit themselves to this great God, and become his loyal subjects.

Observe, 1. The duty required of us all, all that are about him, that have any dependence upon him, or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that has not? We are therefore every one of us commanded to do our homage to the King of kings, *Vow and pay, i. e. take an oath of allegiance to him, and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow. Bind your souls with a bond to him (for that is the nature of a vow) and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves; for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay.* And having taken him for our king, let us bring presents to him, as subjects to their sovereign, *1 Sam. x. 17. Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land, Isa. xvi. 1.* Not that God needs any present we can bring, or can be benefited by it; but thus we must give him honour, and own that we have our all from him. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God. (2.) The reasons to inforce this duty; *Render to all their due, fear to whom fear is due;* and is it not due to God? Yes; (1.) He ought to be feared; he is the fear, so the word is; his name is glorious and fearful; and he is the proper object of our fear; with him is terrible majesty. The God of Abraham is called, *the fear of Isaac, Gen. xxxi. 42.* and we are commanded to *make him our fear, Isa. viii. 13.* When we bring presents to him, we must have an eye to him as greatly to be feared; for he is terrible in his holy places. (2.) He will be feared, even by those who think it their own sole prerogative to be feared, *ver. 12.* He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk, or a bunch of grapes from the vine, so the word signifies. He can dispirit those that are most daring, and make them heartless; for he is, or will be, *terrible to the kings of the earth;* and, sooner or later, if they be not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in vain to rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his wrath, *Rev. vi. 16.* Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom, as it is our duty, to submit to him.

P S A L M LXXVII.

This psalm, according to the method of many other psalms, begins with sorrowful complaints, but ends with comfortable encouragements. The complaints seem to be of personal grievances, but the encouragements relate to the publick concerns of the church, so that it is not certain, whether it was penned upon a personal or a publick account: If they were private troubles that he was groaning under, it teacheth us, that what God has wrought for his church in general, may be improved for the comfort of particular believers; if it was some publick calamity that he is here lamenting, his speaking of it so feelingly as if it had been some particular trouble of his own, shews how much we should lay to heart the interests of the church of God, and make them our own. One of the rabbins saith, this psalm is spoken in the dialect of the captives; and therefore some think it was penned in the captivity in Babylon. (1.) The psalmist complains here of the deep impressions which his troubles made upon his spirits, and the temptation he was in to despair of relief, *ver. 1—10.* (2.) He encourageth himself to hope that it would be well at last, by the remembrance of God's former appearances for the help of his people, of which he gives several instances, *ver. 11—20.* In singing this psalm we must take shame to ourselves for all our sinful distrusts of God, and of his providence and promise, and give to him the glory of his power and goodness by a thankful commemoration of what he has done for us formerly, and a cheerful dependence on him for the future.

¶ To the chief musician, to Jeduthun, A psalm of Asaph.

1. **I** CRIED unto God with my voice: *even* unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me. 2. In the day of my trouble I fought the Lord; my fore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. 3. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. 4. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. 5. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. 6. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search. 7. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? 9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. 10. And I said, This is my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most High.

We have here the lively portraiture of a good man under prevailing melancholy, fallen into, and sinking in that horrible pit, and that miry clay, but struggling to get out: Drooping saints that are of a sorrowful spirit, may here in this glass see their own faces. The conflict which the psalmist had with his griefs and fears, seems to have been over when he penned this record of it; for he saith, *ver. 1. I cried unto God, and he gave ear unto me;* which while the struggle lasted he had not the comfortable sense of, as he had afterwards; but he inserts it in the beginning of his narrative, as an intimation that his trouble did not end in despair; for God heard him, and at length he knew that he heard him. Observe,

1. His melancholy prayers: Being afflicted he prayed, *Jam. v. 13.* and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, *ver. 1. My voice was unto God, and I cried, even with my voice unto God;* he was full of complaints, but he directed them to God, and turned them all into prayers, vocal prayers, very earnest and importunate. Thus he gave vent to his grief, and gained some ease; and he took the right way in order to relief, *ver. 2. In the day of my trouble I fought the Lord.* Note, Days of trouble, must be days of prayer, days of inward trouble especially when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversion of business, or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God; and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind, must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away. *My hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not;* so Dr Hammond reads the following words, as speaking the incessant importunity of his prayers. Compare *Psal. cxliii. 5, 6.*

2. His melancholy grief: Grief may then be called melancholy indeed, (1.) When it admits of no intermission; such was his; my fore, or wound, ran in the night, and bled inwardly, and it ceased not; no, not in the time appointed for rest and sleep. (2.) When it admits of no consolation; and that also was his case: *My soul refuseth to be comforted;* he had no mind to hearken to those that would be his comforters. *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart, Prov. xxv. 20.* Nor had he any mind to think of those things that would be his comforts, he put them far from him, as one that indulged himself in sorrow. Those that are in sorrow upon any account, do not only prejudice themselves, but affront God, if they refuse to be comforted.

3. His melancholy musings: He pored so much upon the trouble, whatever it was, personal or publick, that (1.) The methods that should have relieved him, did but increase his grief, *ver. 3. (1.) One would have thought that the remembrance of God should have comforted him, but it did not; I remembered God, and was troubled, as poor Job, chap. xxiii. 15. I am troubled at his presence, when I consider, I am afraid of him.* When he remembered God, his thoughts fastned only upon his justice, and wrath, and dreadful majesty, and thus God himself became a terror to him. (2.) One would have thought that pouring out his soul before God should have given him ease, but it did not; he complained, and yet his spirit was overwhelmed, and sunk under the load.

(2.) The means of his present relief were denied him, *ver. 4.* He could not sleep; which if it be quiet and refreshing, is a parenthesis to our griefs and cares; *Thou holdest mine eyes waking with thy terrors, which make me full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day.* He could not speak by reason of the disorder

of his thoughts, and the tumult of his spirits, and the mighty confusion his mind was in; he kept silence even from good, while his heart was hot within him; he was ready to burst like a new bottle, Job xxxiii 19. and yet so troubled, that he could not speak and refresh himself. And grief never preys so much upon the spirits, as when it is thus smothered and pent up.

4. His melancholy reflections, *ver. 5, 6. I have considered the days of old*, and compared them with the present days, and our former prosperity doth but aggravate our present calamities; for we see not the wonders that our fathers told us of. Melancholy people are apt to pore altogether upon the days of old, and the years of ancient times, and to magnify them, for the justifying of their own uneasiness and discontent at the present posture of affairs. But say not thou, that the former days were better than these; because it is more than thou knowest whether they were or no, *Eccles. vii. 10.* Neither let the remembrance of the comforts we have lost, make us unthankful for those that are left, or impatient under our crosses.

Particularly, he called to remembrance his song in the night, the comforts with which he had supported himself in his former sorrows, and entertained himself in his former solitude, these songs he remembered, and tried if he could not sing them over again; but he was out of tune for them, and the remembrance of them did but pour out his soul in him, *Psal. xlii. 4. See Job xxxv. 10.*

5. His melancholy fears and apprehensions; *I communed with mine own heart*, *ver. 6.* Come, my soul, what will be issue of these things? What can I think of them, and what can I expect they will come to at last? I made diligent search into the causes of my trouble, enquiring wherefore God contended with me, and what would be the consequences of it? And thus I began to reason, *Will the Lord cast off for ever*, as he doth for the present? He is not now favourable, and will he be favourable no more? His mercy is now gone, and is it clean gone for ever? His promise now fails, and doth it fail for evermore? God is not now gracious, but hath he forgotten to be gracious? His tender mercies have been withheld, perhaps in wisdom, but are they shut up? shut up in anger? *ver. 7, 8, 9.* This is the language of a disconsolate, deserted, soul, now walking in darkness, and having no light; a case not uncommon, even with those that fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his servant, *Isa. l. 10.* He may here be looked upon (1.) As groaning under a sore trouble; God hid his face from him, and withdrew the usual tokens of his favour. Note, Spiritual trouble is of all other most grievous to a gracious soul; nothing wounds and pierceth it like the apprehensions of God's being and angry, the suspending of his favour, and the superseding of his promise; this wounds the spirit, and who can bear that? (2.) As grappling with a strong temptation: Note, God's own people in a cloudy, dark day, may be tempted to make desperate conclusions about their own spiritual state, and the condition of God's church and kingdom in the world, and as to both, to give up all for gone. We may be tempted to think that God has abandoned us, and cast us off; that the covenant of grace fails us, and that the tender mercy of our God shall be for ever withheld from us. But we must not give way to such suggestions as these: If fear and melancholy ask such peevish questions, let faith answer them from the Scripture; *Will the Lord cast off for ever?* God forbid, *Rom. xi. 1.* No; *The Lord will not cast off his people*, *Psal. xciv. 14.* *Will he be favourable no more?* Yes, he will, for tho' he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, *Lam. iii. 32.* *Is his mercy clean gone for ever?* No; his mercy endureth for ever; as it is from everlasting, it is to everlasting, *Psal. ciii. 17.* *Doth his promise fail for evermore?* No; it is impossible for God to lie, *Heb. vi. 18.* *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* No; he cannot deny himself, and his own name which he hath proclaimed gracious and merciful, *Exod. xxxiv. 6.* *Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* No; they are new every morning, *Lam. iii. 22.* and therefore, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* *Hos. xi. 8, 9.*

Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when on a sudden, he first check'd himself with that word, *Selah*, stop there, go no further, let's hear no more of these unbelieving surmises; and he then chid himself, *ver. 10. I said this is mine infirmity.* He is soon aware that it is not well said, and therefore, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* *I said, this is mine affliction;* (so some understand it) this is the calamity that falls to my lot, and I must make the best of it; every one has his affliction, his trouble in the flesh; and this is mine, the cross I must take up: Or rather, this is my sin, it is mine iniquity; the plague of my own heart. These doubts and fears, proceed from the want and weakness of faith, and the corruption of a distemper'd mind. Note, (1.) We all know that ill by ourselves, of which we must say, *this is our infirmity*, a sin that most easily besets us. (2.) Despondency of spirit and distrust of God under affliction, are too often the infirmities of good people, and, as such, are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame, as by the psalmist here; *this is my infirmity.* And when at any time it is working in us we must thus suppress the rising of it, and not suffer the evil spirit to speak. We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as

the psalmist here, *But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.* He had been considering the years of ancient times, *ver. 5.* the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remembrance of which did only add to his grief; but now he considered them, as the years of the right hand of the most High; that those blessings of ancient times came from the Ancient of days, from the power and sovereign disposal of his right hand, who is over all, God blessed for ever, and this satisfied him; for may not the most High with his right hand make what changes he pleaseth?

11. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12. I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings. 13. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? 14. Thou art the God that doest wonders; thou hast declared thy strength among the people. 15. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah.* 16. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee: they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. 17. The clouds poured out water, the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. 18. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world, the earth trembled and shook. 19. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy foot-steps are not known. 20. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The psalmist here recovers himself out of the great distress and plague he was in, and silenceth his own fears of God's casting off his people, by the remembrance of the great things he had done for them formerly, which tho' he had in vain tried to quiet himself with, *ver. 5, 6.* yet he tried again, and upon this second trial found it not in vain; it is good to persevere in the proper means for the strengthening of faith, tho' they do not prove effectual at first. *I will remember, surely I will*, what God has done for his people of old, till I can from thence infer a happy issue of the present dark dispensations, *ver. 11, 12.* Note, 1. The works of the Lord for his people have been wondrous works. 2. They are recorded for us, that they may be remembered by us. 3. That we may have benefit by the remembrance of them, we must meditate upon them, and dwell upon them in our thoughts, and must talk of them, that we may inform ourselves and others further concerning them. 4. The due remembrance of the works of God will be a powerful antidote against distrust of his promise and goodness; for he is God, and changeth not: If he begin he will finish his work, and bring forth the top-stone.

Two things in general satisfied him very much.

(1.) That God's way is in the sanctuary, *ver. 13.* It is in holiness (so some). When we cannot solve the particular difficulties that may arise in our constructions of the divine providence, this we are sure of in general, that God is holy in all his works, that they are all worthy of himself, and consonant to the eternal purity and rectitude of his nature. He has holy ends in all he doth, and will be sanctified in every dispensation of his providence. His way is according to his promise which he has spoken in his holiness, and made known in the sanctuary; what he has done, is according to what he hath said, and may be construed by it; and from what he hath said, we may easily gather, that he will not cast off his people for ever. God's way is for the sanctuary, and for the benefit of it: All he doth is intended for the good of his church.

(2.) That God's way is in the sea; tho' God is holy, just and good in all he doth, yet we cannot give an account of the reasons of his proceedings, nor make any certain judgment of his designs; his path is in the great waters, and his foot-steps are not known, *ver. 19.* God's ways are like the deep waters which cannot be fathomed, *Psal. xxxvi. 6.* Like the way of a ship in the sea, which cannot be tracked, *Prov. xxx. 18, 19.* God's proceedings are always to be acquiesced in, but cannot always be accounted for.

He instanceth in some particulars, for which he goes as far back as the infancy of the Jewish church, and from which he gathers (1.) That there is no God to be compared with the God of Israel, *ver. 13. Who is so great a God as our God?* Let us first give to God the glory of the great things he has done for his people, and acknowledge him therein great above all comparison; and then we may take to ourselves the comfort of what he has done, and encourage ourselves with it. (2.) That he is a God of almighty power, *ver. 14. Thou art the God that alone doest wonders*, above the power of any creature, thou hast visibly and beyond any contradiction declared thy strength among the people. What God has done for his church, has been a standing declaration of his almighty power, for therein he has made bare his everlasting arm.

(1.) God brought Israel out of Egypt, *ver. 15.* This was the beginning of mercy to them, and was yearly to be commemorated among them in the passover. Thou hast with thine arm, stretched out in so many miracles, redeemed thy people out of the hand of the Egyptians. Tho' they were delivered by power, yet they are said to be redeemed, as if it had been done by price, because it was typical of the great redemption which was to be wrought out in the fulness of time both by price and power. Those that were redeemed, are here called not only the sons of Jacob, to whom the promise was made, but of Joseph also, who had a most firm and lively belief of the performance of it; for when he was dying he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones.

(2.) He divided the Red-sea before them, *ver. 16.* The waters gave way, and a lane was made through that crowd instantly, as if they had seen God himself at the head of the armies of Israel, and had retired for fear of him. Not only the surface of the waters, but the depths were troubled, and opened to the right and to the left, in obedience to his word of command.

(3.) He destroyed the Egyptians, *ver. 17.* The clouds poured out water upon them, while the pillar of fire, like an umbrella over the camp of Israel, sheltered it from the shower, in which, as in the deluge, the waters that were above the firmament concurred with those that were beneath the firmament to destroy the rebels. Then the skies sent out a sound, thine arrows also went abroad, which is explained, *ver. 18.* The voice of thy thunder was heard in the heaven, that is the sound which the skies sent forth; the lightnings lightened the world, those are the arrows that went abroad, by which the host of the Egyptians was discomfited, with so much terror, that the earth of the adjacent coast shook and trembled. Thus God's way was in the sea, for the destruction of his enemies, as well as for the salvation of his people; and yet when the waters returned to their place, his footsteps were not known, *ver. 19.* There was no mark set upon the place, as there was afterwards in Jordan, *Josh. iv. 9.* We do not read in the story of Israel's passing through the Red-sea, that there were thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake; yet there might be, and Josephus saith there were, such displays of the divine terror upon that occasion. But it may refer to the thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes that were at mount Sinai, when the law was given.

(4.) He took his people Israel under his own conduct and protection, *ver. 20.* Thou leddest thy people like a flock. They being weak and helpless, and apt to wander like a flock of sheep, and lying exposed to the beasts of prey, God went before them with all the care and tenderness of a shepherd, that they might not miscarry. The pillar of cloud and fire led them, yet that is not here taken notice of, but the agency of Moses and Aaron, by whose hand God led them; they could not do it without God, but God did it with and by them. Moses was their governor, Aaron their high-priest, they were guides, overseers, and rulers, to Israel, and by them God led them. The right and happy administration of the two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry, are, tho' not so great a miracle, yet as great a mercy to any people, as the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness.

The psalm concludes abruptly, and doth not apply those ancient instances of God's power to the present distresses of the church, as one might have expected: But as soon as the good man began to meditate on these things, he found he had gained his point; his very entrance upon this matter gave him light and joy, (*Psal. cxix. 130.*) his fears suddenly and strangely vanished, so that he needed to go no further; he went his way and did eat, and his countenance was no more sad.

P S A L M LXXVIII.

This psalm is historical; it is a narrative of the great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel; the great sins wherewith they had provoked him, and the many tokens of his displeasure they had been under for their sins. The psalmist began in the foregoing psalm to relate God's wonders of old, for his own encouragement in a difficult time, there he broke off abruptly, but here resumes the subject, for the edification of the church, and enlargeth much upon it; shewing not only how good God had been to them, which was an earnest of further finishing mercy; but how basely they had carried themselves to God, which justified him in correcting them as he did at this time, and forbade all complaints. Here is, (1.) The preface to this church history, commanding the attention of the present age to it, and recom-

mending it to the study of the generations to come, *ver. 1—8.*

(2.) The history itself from Moses to David; it is put into a psalm or song, that it might be the better remembred, and transmitted to posterity; and that the singing of it might affect them, with the things here related, more than they would be with a bare narrative of them. The general scope of this psalm we have, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* where notice is taken of the present rebukes they were under, *ver. 9.* the sin which brought them under these rebukes, *ver. 10.* and the mercies of God to them formerly, which aggravated that sin, *ver. 11.* As to the particulars, we are here told, (1.) What wonderful works God had wrought for them in bringing them out of Egypt, *ver. 12—16.* providing for them in the wilderness, *ver. 23—29.* plaguing and ruining their enemies, *ver. 43—53.* and at length putting them in possession of the land of promise, *ver. 54, 55.* (2.) How ungrateful they were to God for his favours to them, and how many and great provocations they were guilty of. How they murmured against God and distrusted him, *ver. 17—20.* and did but counterfeit repentance and submission when he punished them, *ver. 34—37.* thus grieving and tempting him, *ver. 40—42.* How they affronted God with their idolatries after they came to Canaan, *ver. 56—58.* (3.) How God had justly punished them for their sins, *ver. 21, 22.* in the wilderness, making their sin their punishment, *ver. 29—33.* and now of late when the ark was taken by the Philistines, *ver. 59—64.* (4.) How graciously God had spared them, and returned in mercy to them, notwithstanding their provocations. He had forgiven them formerly, *ver. 38, 39.* and now of late had removed the judgments they had brought upon themselves, and brought them under a happy establishment both in church and state, *ver. 65—72.* As the general scope of this psalm may be of use to us in the singing of it, to put us upon recollecting what God has done for us, and for his church formerly, and what we have done against him, so the particulars also may be of use to us, for warning against those sins of unbelief and ingratitude, which Israel of old was notoriously guilty of, and the record of which was preserved for our learning; these things happened unto them for ensamples, *1 Cor. x. 11. Heb. iv. 11.*

¶ Maschil of Asaph.

1. **G**IVE ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: 3. Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come, the praises of the LORD; and his strength and his wonderful works that he hath done. 5. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers: that they should make them known to their children. 6. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise and declare them to their children: 7. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments: 8. And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

These verses which contain the preface to this history, shew that the psalm answers the title; it is indeed Maschil, a psalm to give instruction, if we receive not the instruction it gives, it is our own fault.

Here, (1.) The psalmist demands attention to what he wrote, *ver. 1.* Give ear, O my people, to my law: Some make these the psalmist's words; David as a king, or Asaph, in his name, as his secretary of state, or scribe to the sweet-finger of Israel, here calls upon the people, as his people committed to his charge, to give ear to his law. He calls his instructions his law or edict; such was their commending force in themselves, every good truth received in the light and love of it, will have the power of the law upon the conscience; yet that was not all, David was a king, and he would interpose his royal power for the edification of his people: If God, by his grace, make great men, good men, they will be capable of doing more good than others, because their word will be a law to all about them; who must therefore give ear, and hearken; for to what purpose is divine revelation brought to our ears, if we will not incline our ears to it, both humble ourselves, and engage ourselves to hear it, and heed it? Or the psalmist being a prophet speaks as God's mouth, and so calls them his people, and demands subjection to what was said as to a law. Let him that

that has an ear thus *hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*, Rev. ii. 7.

Several reasons are given why we should diligently attend to that which is here related.

1. The things here discoursed of are weighty, and deserve consideration, strange, and need it, *ver. 2. I will open my mouth in a parable*, in that which is sublime and uncommon, but very excellent and well-worthy your attention; *I will utter dark sayings*, which challenge your most serious regards as much as the ænigmas with which the eastern princes and learned men used to pose one another. These are called dark sayings, not because they are hard to be understood, but because they are greatly to be admired, and carefully to be looked into. This is said to be fulfilled in the parables which our Saviour put forth, *Matt. xiii. 35.* which were (as this) representations of the state of the kingdom of God among men.

2. They are the monuments of antiquity: *Dark sayings of old, which our fathers have told us*, *ver. 3.* They are things of undoubted certainty, we have heard them and known them, and there is no room left to question the truth of them: The gospel of Luke is called a *declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us*, *Luke i. 1.* so were the things here related. The honour we owe to our parents and ancestors, obligeth us to attend to that which our fathers have told us, and as far as it appears to be true and good, to receive it with so much the more reverence and regard.

3. They are to be transmitted to posterity, and it lies as a charge upon us carefully to hand them down, *ver. 4.* Because our fathers told them us, *we will not hide them from their children.* Our children are called theirs, for they were in care for their feed's feed, and looked upon them as theirs; and in teaching our children the knowledge of God, we repay to our parents some of that debt we owe to them for teaching us. Nay, if we have no children of our own, we must declare the things of God to their children, the children of others. Our care must be for posterity in general, and not only for our own posterity. And for the generation to come hereafter, the children that shall be born, as well for the generation that is next rising up, and the children that are born. That which we are to transmit to our children, is not only the knowledge of languages, arts, and sciences, their liberty and property, but especially the praises of the Lord, and his strength appearing in the wonderful works that he has done. Our great care must be to lodge our religion, that great depositum, pure and entire in the hands of those that succeed us.

There are two things, the full and clear knowledge of which we must preserve the entail of to our heirs.

1. The law of God, for this was given with a particular charge to teach it diligently to their children, *ver. 5. He established a testimony*, or covenant, and enacted a law in Jacob and Israel, gave them precepts and promises, which he *commanded them to make known to their children*, *Deut. vi. 7, 20.* The church of God, as the historian saith of the Roman common-wealth, was not to be *res unius ætatis*, a business of one age, but was to be kept up from one generation to another; and therefore, as God provided for a succession of ministers in the tribe of Levi, and the house of Aaron, so he appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law; and when they were grown up, they must arise, *and declare them to their children*, *ver. 6.* That as one generation of God's servants and worshippers passeth away, another generation may come, and the church, as the earth, may abide for ever; and thus God's name among men may be as the days of heaven.

2. The providences of God concerning them, both in mercy, and in judgment. The former seems to be mentioned for the sake of this; since God gave order, that his laws should be made known to posterity, it is requisite that with them his works also should be made known, the fulfilling of the promises made to the obedient, and the threatenings denounced against the disobedient. Let these be told to our children, and our childrens children,

1. That they may take encouragement to conform themselves to the will of God, *ver. 7.* That not forgetting the works of God wrought in former days, they might set their hope in God, and keep his commandments, might make his command their rule, and his covenant their stay; and those only may with confidence hope for God's salvation, that make conscience of doing his commandments. The works of God duly considered, will very much strengthen our resolution both to set our hope in him, and to keep his commandments, for he is able to bear us out in both.

2. That they may take warning not to conform themselves to the example of their fathers, *ver. 8. That they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.* See here, (1.) What was the character of their fathers, tho' they were the seed of Abraham, taken into covenant with God, and, for ought we know, the only professing people he had then in the world, yet they were stubborn and rebellious, and walked contrary to God, in direct opposition to his will: they did indeed

profess relation to him, but they did not set their hearts right, they were not cordial in their engagements to God, nor inward with him in their worship of him, and therefore their *spirit was not stedfast with him*, but upon every occasion they flew off from him. Note, Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy; those that do not set their hearts right, will not be stedfast with God, but play fast and loose. (2.) What was a charge to the children; *That they be not as their fathers.* Note, Those that are descended from wicked and ungodly ancestors, if they will but consider the word and works of God, will see reason enough not to tread in their steps: It will be no excuse for a vain conversation, that it was received by tradition from our fathers, *1 Pet. i. 18.* For what we know of them that was ill, must be an admonition to us, that we dread that which was so pernicious to them, as we would shun those courses which they took that were ruinous to their health or estates.

9. The children of Ephraim being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. 10. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law: 11. And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them: 12. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. 13. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and he made the waters to stand as an heap. 14. In the day-time he also led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. 15. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. 16. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. 17. And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the most High in the wilderness. 18. And they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust. 19. Yea, they spake against God: they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? 20. Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? 21. Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth, so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; 22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: 23. Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, 24. And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25. Man did eat angels food: he sent them meat to the full. 26. He caused an eastwind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south-wind. 27. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea. 28. And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. 29. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; 30. They were not estranged from their lust: but while their meat was yet in their mouths, 31. The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. 32. For all this they sinned still: and believed not for his wondrous works. 33. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. 34. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. 35. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. 36. Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. 37. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. 38. But he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. 39. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away and cometh not again.

In these verses,

1. The psalmist observes the late rebukes of providence that the people of Israel had been under, which they had brought upon themselves by their dealing treacherously with God, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* The children of Ephraim, in which tribe Shiloh was,

was, tho' they were well armed, and shot with bows, yet turned back in the day of battle. This seems to refer to that shameful defeat which the Philistines gave them in Eli's time, when they took the ark prisoner, 1 Sam. iv. 10, 11. Which the psalmist here begins to speak of, and after a long digression returns to it again, ver. 61. And well might that event be thus fresh in mind in David's time above forty years after, for the ark which in that memorable battle was seized by the Philistines, tho' it was quickly brought out of captivity, was never brought out of obscurity, till David fetched it from Kirjath-jearim to his own city. Observe, (1.) The shameful cowardice of the children of Ephraim, that warlike tribe, so famed for valiant men, Joshua's tribe; the children of that tribe, tho' as well armed as ever, yet turned back when they came to face the enemy. Note, Weapons of war stand men in little stead without a martial spirit, and that is gone if God be gone. Sin dispirits men, and takes away the heart. (2.) The causes of their cowardice which were no less shameful; and these were, 1. A shameful violation of God's law, and their covenant with him, ver. 10. They were basely treacherous and perfidious, for they kept not the covenant of God, and basely stubborn and rebellious (as they were described, ver. 8.) for they peremptorily refused to walk in his law, and in effect told him to his face they would not be ruled by him. 2. A shameful ingratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon them. They forgot his works and his wonders, his works of wonder which they ought to have admired, ver. 11. Note, Our forgetfulness of God's works is at the bottom of our disobedience to his laws.

2. He takes occasion from hence to consult precedents, and to compare this with their fathers case; who were in like manner unmindful of God's mercies to them, and ungrateful to their founder and great benefactor, and were therefore often brought under his displeasure. The narrative in these verses is very observable, for it relates a kind of struggle between God's goodness, and man's badness, and mercy at length rejoiceth against judgment.

1. God did great things for his people Israel, when he first incorporated them, and formed them into a people. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, and not only in their sight, but in their cause, and for their benefit, so strange, so kind, that one would think they should never be forgotten. What he did for them in the land of Egypt is only mentioned here, ver. 12. But afterwards resumed, ver. 43. And here he goes on to shew, (1.) How he made a lane for them through the Red-sea, and caused them, i. e. gave them courage to pass thro', tho' the waters stood over their heads as a heap, ver. 13. see Isa. lxiii. 12, 13. where God is said to lead them by the hand, as it were through the deep, that they should not stumble. (2.) How he provided a guide for them through the untrodden paths of the wilderness, ver. 14. He led them step by step, in the day time by a cloud, which also sheltered them from the heat, and all the night with a light of fire, which, perhaps, warmed the air, however, made the darkness of night the less frightful, and perhaps kept off wild beasts, Zech. ii. 5. (3.) How he furnished their camp with fresh water in a dry and thirsty land where no water was; not by opening the bottles of heaven, that had been a common way, but by broaching a rock, ver. 15, 16. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, which yielded water, tho' they were not capable of receiving it either from the clouds above, or the springs beneath. Out of the dry and hard rock he gave them drink, not distilled as out of an alembick, drop by drop, but in streams running down like rivers, and as out of the great depths; God gives abundantly, and is rich in mercy; he gives seasonably, and sometimes makes us to feel the want of mercies, that we may the better know the worth of them. This water which God gave Israel out of the rock was the more valuable, because it was spiritual drink, and that rock was Christ.

2. When God began thus to bless them, they began to affront him, ver. 17. They sinned yet more against him, more than they had done in Egypt, tho' there they were bad enough, Ezek. xx. 8. They bore the miseries of their servitude better than the difficulties of their deliverance; and never murmured at their task-masters, so as they did at Moses and Aaron, as if they were delivered to do all these abominations, Jer. vii. 10. As sin sometimes takes occasion by the deliverance to become more exceeding sinful; they provoked the most High; tho' he is most High, and they knew themselves an unequal match for him, yet they provoked him, and even bid defiance to his justice. And this in the wilderness, where he had them at his mercy, and therefore they were bound in interest to please him; and where he shewed them so much mercy, and therefore they were bound in gratitude to please him; yet there they said and did that which they knew would provoke him, they tempted God in their heart, ver. 18. Their sin began in their heart, and thence it took its malignity, They do always err in their heart, Heb. iii. 10. Thus they tempted God, tried his patience to the utmost whether he would bear with them, or no; and

No. xliii.

in effect, bid him do his worst. Two ways they provoked him,

(1.) By desiring, or rather demanding, that which he had not thought fit to give them; they asked meat for their lust: God had given them meat for their hunger in the manna, wholesome pleasant food, and in abundance, he had given them meat for their faith, out of the heads of leviathan which he brake in pieces, Psal. lxxiv. 14. But all this would not serve, they must have meat for their lust; dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God, than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh.

(2.) By distrusting his power to give them what they desired: This was tempting God indeed! They challenged him to give them flesh; and if he did not, they would say, it was because he could not, not because he did not see it fit for them, ver. 19. They spake against God. They that set bounds to God's power, speak against him: It was as injurious a reflection as could be cast upon God, to say, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? They had manna, but they did not think they had a table furnished, unless they had boiled and roast, a first, a second, and a third course, as they had in Egypt, where they had both flesh and fish, and sauce too, Exod. xvi. 3. Numb. xi. 5. Dishes of meat, and salvers of fruit: What an unreasonable, insatiable, thing is luxury! Such a mighty thing did these epicures think a table well furnished to be, that they thought it was more than God himself could give them in that wilderness; whereas the beasts of the forest, and all the fowls of the mountains are his, Psal. l. 10, 11. Their disbelief of God's power was so much the worse, in that they did at the same time own that he had done as much as that came to, ver. 20. Behold, he smote the rock that waters gushed out, which they and their cattle drunk of. And whether is easier, to furnish a table in the wilderness, which a rich man can do, or to fetch water out of a rock, which the greatest potentate on the earth cannot do? Never did unbelief, tho' always unreasonable, ask so absurd a question; Can he that melted down a rock into streams of water, give bread also? Or, can he that has given bread, provide flesh also? Is any thing too hard for omnipotence? When once the ordinary powers of nature are exceeded, God has made bare his arm, and we must conclude, nothing is impossible with him. Be it never so great a thing that we ask, it becomes us to own, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.

3. God justly repented the provocation, and was much displeased with them, ver. 21. The Lord heard this, and was wroth. Note, God is a witness to all our murmurings and distrusts; he hears them, and is much displeased with them. A fire was kindled for this against Jacob, the fire of the Lord burnt among them, Numb. xi. 1. Or, it may be understood of the fire of God's anger which came up against Israel. To unbelievers our God is himself a consuming fire: And those that will not believe the power of God's mercy, shall feel the power of his indignation, and be made to confess, that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Now here we are told,

(1.) Why God thus repented the provocation, ver. 4. Because by this it appeared, that they believed not in God, they did not give credit to the revelation he had made of himself to them, for they durst not commit themselves to him, nor venture themselves with him; they trusted not in the salvation he had begun to work for them; for then they would not thus have questioned its progress. Those cannot be said to trust in God's salvation as their felicity at last, who cannot find in their hearts to trust in his providence for food convenient in the way to it. And that which aggravated their unbelief, was the experience they had had of the power and goodness of God, ver. 23, 24, 25. He had given them undeniable proofs of his power, not only on earth beneath, but in heaven above; for he commanded the clouds from above, as one that had created them and commanded them into being; he made what use he pleased of them. Ordinarily by their showers they contribute to the earth's producing corn; but now, when God so commanded them, they showered down corn themselves, which is therefore called here, the corn of heaven; for heaven can do the work without the earth, but not the earth without heaven. God who has the key of the clouds, opened the doors of heaven, that is more than opening the windows, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, Mal. iii. 10. To all that by faith and prayer, ask, seek, and knock, these doors shall at any time be opened, for the God of heaven is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; he not only keeps a good house, but keeps open house. Justly might God take it ill they should distrust him, when he had been so very kind to them, that he had rained down manna upon them to eat, substantial food daily, duly, enough for all, enough for each, man did eat angels food, such as angels, if they had occasion for food, would eat and be thankful; or rather, such as was given by the ministry of angels, and (as the Chaldee reads it) descended from the dwelling of angels. Every one, even the least child in Israel, did eat the bread of the mighty; (so the margin reads it) the weakest stomach could digest it, and yet it was so nourishing, that it was strong meat for strong men.

And tho' the provision was so good, yet they were not stinted, nor ever reduced to short allowance; for he sent them meat to the full, if they gathered little, it was their own fault; and yet even then, they had no lack, *Exod. xvi. 18.* The daily provision God makes for us, and has made ever since we came into the world, tho' it has not so much of miracle as this, has no less of mercy, and is therefore a great aggravation of our distrust of God.

(2.) How he expressed his resentment of the provocation, not in denying them what they so inordinately lusted after, but in granting it to them. (1.) Did they question his power, he soon gave them a sensible conviction that he could furnish a table in the wilderness. Though the winds seem to blow where they list, yet when he pleased he could make them his caterers to fetch in provisions, *ver. 26.* He caused an east-wind to blow, and a south-wind, either a south-east-wind, or an east-wind, first to bring in the quails from that quarter, and then a south-wind to bring in more from that quarter; so that he rained flesh upon them, and that of the most delicate sort, not butchers-meat, but wild-fowl, and abundance of it, *as dust, as the sand of the sea, ver. 27.* So that the meanest Israelite might have his belly full of it, and it cost them nothing, no not the pains of fetching it from the mountains, for *He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitation, ver. 28.* we have the story, *Numb. xi. 31, 32.* See how good God is, even to the evil and unthankful, and wonder that his goodness doth not overcome their badness. See what little reason we have to judge of God's love by such gifts of his bounty as these; dainty bits are no tokens of his peculiar favour: Christ gave dry bread to the disciples he loved, but a sop dipped in the sauce to Judas that betrayed him. (2.) Did they defy his justice, and boast that they had gained their point; he made them pay dear for their quails, for though he gave them their own desire, they were not estranged from their lust, *ver. 29, 30. i. e.* their appetite was insatiable, they were well filled, and yet they were not satisfied; for they knew not what they would have; such is the nature of lust, it is content with nothing, and the more it is humoured, the more humourous it grows: they that indulge their lust, will never be estranged from it. Or it intimates, that God's liberality did not make them ashamed of their ungrateful luskings, as it would have done if they had had any sense of honour. But what came of it? While the meat was yet in their mouth, rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, *ver. 31.* those that were most luxurious, and most daring. See *Numb. xi. 33, 34.* They were fed as sheep for the slaughter: the butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites that did eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom; they who make a god of their belly, their end is destruction, *Phil. iii. 19.* The prosperity of fools shall destroy them, and their ruin will be the greater.

4. The judgments of God upon them did not reform them, nor attain the end, no more than his mercies, *ver. 32.* For all this they sinned still, they murmured and quarrelled with God and Moses as much as ever. Though God was wrath and smote them, yet they went on forwardly in the way of their heart, *Isa. lvii. 17.* they believed not for his wondrous works. Though his works of justice were as wondrous, and as great proofs of his power as his works of mercy, yet they were not wrought upon by them to fear God, nor convinced how much it was their interest to make him their friend. Those hearts are hard indeed, that will neither be melted by the mercies of God, nor broken by his judgments.

5. They persisting in their sins, God proceeded in his judgments, but they were judgments of another nature, which wrought not suddenly, but slowly. He punished them, not now with such acute diseases as that was which slew the fattest of them, but a lingering chronic distemper, *ver. 33.* Therefore their days did he consume in vanity in the wilderness, and their years in trouble. By an irreversible doom, they were condemned to wear out thirty-eight tedious years in the wilderness, which indeed were consumed in vanity; for in all those years there was not a step taken nearer Canaan, but they were turned back again, and wandered to and fro' as in a labyrinth, nor one stroke struck towards the conquest of it: and not only in vanity, but in trouble, for their carcasses were condemned to fall in the wilderness, and there they all perished but Caleb and Joshua. Note, Those that sin still, must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we spend our days in so much vanity and trouble, why we live with so little comfort, and to so little purpose, is, because we do not live by faith.

6. Under these rebukes they professed repentance, but they were not cordial and sincere in it. (1.) Their profession was plausible enough, *ver. 34, 35.* When he slew them, or condemned them to be slain, then they sought him; they confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. When some were slain, others in a fright cried to God for mercy, and promised they would reform and be very good, then they returned to God, and enquired early

after him: So one would take them to be such as desired to find him. And they pretended to do this, because, however they had forgotten it formerly, now they remembered that God was their rock, and therefore now they needed him, they would fly to him and take shelter in him: and that the high God was their Redeemer, that brought them out of Egypt, and to whom therefore they might come with boldness. Afflictions are sent to put us in mind of God as our rock and our Redeemer; for in prosperity we are apt to forget him. (2.) They were not sincere in this profession, *ver. 36, 37.* They did but flatter him with their mouth, as if they thought by fair speeches to prevail with him to revoke the sentence, and remove the judgment, with a secret intention to break their word when the danger was over; they did not return to God with their whole heart, but feignedly, *Jer. iii. 10.* All their professions, prayers, and promises, were extorted by the rack; it was plain they did not mean as they said, for they did not stick to it; they thawed in the sun, but froze in the shade: they did but lie to God with their tongues, for their heart was not with him, was not right with him, appeared by the issue, for they were not steadfast in his covenant. They were not sincere in their reformation, for they were not constant: and by thinking thus to impose upon a heart-searching God, they really put as great an affront upon him as by any of their reflections.

7. God hereupon in pity to them put a stop to the judgments which were threatened and in part executed, *ver. 38, 39.* But he being full of compassion forgave their iniquity. One would think this counterfeit repentance should have filled up the measure of their iniquity. What could be more provoking than to lie thus to the holy God? than thus to keep back part of the price, the chief part, *Acts v. 3.* And yet he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity thus far, that he did not destroy them, and cut them off from being a people, as justly he might have done; but spared their lives till they had reared another generation which should enter into the promised land. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it. *Isa. lxv. 8.* Many a time he turned his anger away; for he is Lord of his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath, to deal with them as they deserved: and why did he not? Not because their ruin would have been any loss to him, but (1.) Because he was full of compassion, and when he was going to destroy them his repentings were kindled together, and he said, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?* *Hos. xi. 8.* (2.) Because though they did not rightly remember that he was their rock, he remembered that they were but flesh. He considered the corruption of their nature which inclined them to evil, and was pleased to make that an excuse for his sparing them, though it was really no excuse for their sin. See *Gen. vi. 3.* He considered the weakness and frailty of their nature, and what an easy thing it would be to crush them, they are as a wind that passeth away and cometh not again. They may soon be taken off, but when they are gone, they are gone irrecoverably, and then what will become of the covenant with Abraham? They are flesh, they are wind; from whence it were easy to argue, they may justly, they may presently be cut off, and there would be no loss of them: but God argues on the contrary, Therefore he will not destroy them; for the true reason is, *He is full of compassion.*

40. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert? 41. Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the holy One of Israel. 42. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. 43. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan: 44. And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. 45. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs which destroyed them. 46. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore-trees with frost. 48. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. 49. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. 50. He made a way to his anger, he spared not their soul from death: but gave their life over to the pestilence. 51. And smote all the first-born in Egypt: the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52. But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. 53. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea over-whelmed their enemies. 54. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. 55. He cast out

out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. 56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: 57. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. 58. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. 59. When God heard *this*, he was wrath, and greatly abhorred Israel: 60. So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men: 61. And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hand. 62. He gave his people over also unto the sword: and was wroth with his inheritance. 63. The fire consumed their young men: and their maidens were not given to marriage. 64. Their priests fell by the sword: and their widows made no lamentation. 65. Then the LORD awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. 66. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach. 67. Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph: and chose not the tribe of Ephraim. 68. But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. 69. And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath established for ever. 70. He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds: 71. From following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart: and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

The matter and scope of this paragraph is the same with the former, shewing what great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, how provoking they had been, what judgments he had brought upon them for their sins, and yet how in judgment he remembered mercy at last. Let not those that receive mercy from God, be thereby emboldened to sin, for the mercies they receive will aggravate their sin, and hasten the punishment of it; yet let not those that are under divine rebukes for sin be discouraged from repentance, for their punishments are means of repentance, and shall not prevent the mercy God has yet in store for them. Observe,

1. The sins of Israel in the wilderness again reflected on, because written for our admonition, *ver. 40, 41. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness?* Not once, or twice, but many a time; and the repetition of the provocation, was a great aggravation of it, as well as the place, *ver. 17. God kept an account how oft they provoked him, tho' they did not, Numb. xiv. 22. They have tempted me these ten times.* By provoking him they did not so much anger him as grieve him; for he looked upon them as his children, *Israel is my Son, my first-born*, and the undutiful, disrespectful carriage of children, doth more grieve than anger the tender parents; they lay it to heart, and take it unkindly. *Isa. i. 2. They grieved him, because they put him under a necessity of afflicting them; which he did not willingly.* After they had humbled themselves before him, they *turned back and tempted God*, as before, and limited the holy One of Israel, prescribing to him what proofs he should give of his power and presence with them, and what methods he should take in leading them, and providing for them. They limited him to their way, and their time, as if he did not observe that they quarrelled with him. It is presumption for us to limit the holy One of Israel; for being the holy One, he will do what is most for his own glory: and being the holy One of Israel, he will do what is most for their good; and we both impeach his wisdom, and betray our own pride and folly, if we go about to prescribe to him. That which occasioned their limiting God for the future, was their forgetting his former favours, *ver. 42. They remembered not his hand*, how strong it is, and how it had been stretched out for them, nor *the day when he delivered them from the enemy*, Pharaoh that great enemy that sought their ruin. There are some days made remarkable by signal deliverances, which ought never to be forgotten; for the remembrance of them would encourage us in our greatest straits.

2. The mercies of God to Israel which they were unmindful of when they tempted God, and limited him, and this catalogue of the works of wonder which God wrought for them, begins higher, and is carried down further than that before, *ver. 12, &c.*

(1.) This begins with their deliverance out of Egypt, and the plagues with which God compelled the Egyptians to let them go: these were the signs God wrought in Egypt, *ver.*

43. the wonders he wrought in the field of Zoan, *i. e.* in the country of Zoan, as we say, *in Agro N.* meaning in such a county.

Divers of the plagues of Egypt are here instanced in, which speak aloud the power of God, his favour to Israel, as well as terror to his and their enemies. As (1.) The *turning of the waters into blood*: they had made themselves drunk with the blood of God's people, even the infants, and now God gave them blood to drink, *for they were worthy*, *ver. 44.* (2.) The flies and frogs which infested them, mixtures of insects in swarms, in shoals, which devoured them, which destroyed them; *ver. 45.* For God can make the weakest and most despicable animals, instruments of his wrath, when he pleaseth; what they want in strength may be made up in number. (3.) The plague of locusts, which devoured their increase, and that which they had laboured for, *ver. 46.* They are called *God's great army*, *Joel ii. 25.* (4.) The hail, which destroyed their trees, especially their vines, the weakest of trees, *ver. 47.* and their cattle, especially their flocks of sheep, the weakest of their cattle, which were killed with hot thunder-bolts, *ver. 48.* And the frost, or congealed rain (as the word signifies) was so violent, that it destroyed even the sycamore-trees. (5.) The death of the first-born, was the last and forest of the plagues of Egypt, and that which perfected the deliverance of Israel; it was first in intention, *Exod. iv. 23.* but last in execution; for, if gentler methods would have done the work, this had been prevented: but it is here largely described, *ver. 49, 50, 51.* (1.) The anger of God was the cause of it; wrath was now come upon the Egyptians to the uttermost; Pharaoh's heart having been often hardened after lesser judgments had softened it, God now *stirred up all his wrath*; for he *cast upon them the fierceness of his anger*, anger in the highest degree; wrath and indignation the cause, and trouble (tribulation and anguish, *Rom. ii. 8, 9.*) the effect. This from on high he cast upon them, and did not spare, and they could not *fly out of his hands*, *Job xxvii. 22. He made a way*; or, as the word is, *He weighed a path to his anger*; he did not cast it upon them uncertainly, but by weight; his anger was weighed with the greatest exactness in the balances of justice; for in his greatest displeasure he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures: the path of his anger is always weighed. (2.) The angels of God were the instruments employed in this execution; *he sent evil angels among them*; not evil in their own nature, but in respect to the errand upon which they were sent; they were destroying angels; or angels of punishment, which passed through all the land of Egypt, with orders according to the weighed paths of God's anger, not to kill all, but the first-born only. Good angels become evil angels to sinners; they that make the holy God their enemy, let them never expect the holy angels to be their friends. (3.) The execution itself was very severe. *He spared not their soul from death*, but suffered death to ride in triumph among them, and *gave their life over to the pestilence*, which cut the thread of life off immediately; for he *smote all the first-born in Egypt*, *ver. 51. the chief of their strength*, the hopes of their respective families; children are the parents strength, and the first-born the *chief of their strength*. Thus, because Israel was precious in God's sight, he *gave men for them, and people for their life*, *Isa. xliii. 4.*

By these plagues on the Egyptians, God made a way for his own people to go forth like sheep; distinguishing between them and the Egyptians, *as the shepherd divideth between the sheep and the goats*, having set his own mark on these sheep, by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their door-posts. *He made them go forth like sheep*, not knowing whither they went, and *guided them in the wilderness*, like as a shepherd guides his flock, with all possible care and tenderness, *ver. 52. He led them on safely*, tho' in dangerous paths, so that *they feared not*, *i. e.* they did not need to fear; they were indeed frightened at the Red-sea, *Exod. xiv. 10.* But that was said to them, and done for them, which effectually silenced their fears. *But the sea overwhelmed their enemies* that ventured to pursue them into it, *ver. 53.* It was a lane to them, but a grave to their persecutors.

(2.) It is carried down as far as their settlement in Canaan, *ver. 54. He brought them to the border of the sanctuary*, *i. e.* to that land, in the midst of which he set up his sanctuary, which was as it were the centre and metropolis, the crown and glory of it; that is a happy land which is the border of God's sanctuary; it was the happiness of that land, that there God was known, and there was his sanctuary, and dwelling-place, *Psal. lxxvi. 1, 2.* The whole land in general, and Sion in particular, was *the mountain which his right hand had purchased*, which by his own power he had set apart for himself. See *Psal. xlv. 3. He made them to ride on the high places of the earth*, *Isa. lviii. 14. Deut. xxxii. 13.* They found the Canaanites in the full and quiet possession of that land, but God *cast out the heathen before them*, not only took away their title to it, as the Lord of the whole earth, but himself executed the judgment given against them, and as Lord of hosts turned them out of it, and made his people *Israel tread upon their high places, dividing each tribe an inheritance by line*, and making them *to dwell* in the houses of those whom they had destroyed. God could have turned.

turned the uninhabited, uncultivated, wilderness (which perhaps was almost as much compass of ground as Canaan) into fruitful soil, and have planted them there; but the land he designed them was to be a type of heaven, and therefore must be *the glory of all lands*; it must likewise be fought for, for *the kingdom of heaven suffers violence*.

3. The sins of Israel after they were settled in Canaan, *ver. 56, 57, 58*. The children were *like their fathers*, and brought their old corruptions into their new habitations; tho' God had done so much for them, yet *they tempted and provoked the most high God* still. He gave them his testimonies, but they did not keep them; they began very promisingly, but they turned back, gave God good words, but dealt unfaithfully, and were like a deceitful bow, which seemed likely to fend the arrow to the mark, but when it is drawn breaks, and drops the arrow at the archer's foot; or perhaps makes it recoil in his face. There was no hold of them, nor any confidence to be put in their promises or professions. They seemed sometimes devoted to God, but they presently turned aside, and *provoked him to anger with their high places, and their graven images*. Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset them, and which, tho' they often professed their repentance for, they as often relapsed into. It was spiritual adultery either to worship idols, or to worship God by images, as if he had been an idol, and therefore by it they are said to *move him to jealousy*, Deut. xxxii. 16, 21.

4. The judgments God brought upon them for these sins. Their place in Canaan would no more secure them in a sinful way, than their descent from Israel, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you*, Amos iii. 2. Idolatry is winked at among the Gentiles, but not in Israel. (1.) God was displeased with them, *ver. 59*. *When God heard this*, when he heard the cry of their iniquity, which came before him, *he was wroth*, he took it very heinously, as well he might, and he greatly abhorred Israel, whom he had greatly loved and delighted in. They that had been the people of his choice, became the generation of his wrath. Presumptuous sins, idolatries especially, render even Israelites odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice. (2.) He deserted his tabernacle among them, and removed the defence which was upon that glory, *ver. 60*. God never leaves us, till we leave him, never withdraws, till we have driven him from us. His name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God, and therefore no marvel if a people whom he had betrothed to himself, be loathed and rejected, and he refuseth to co-habit with them any longer, when they have embraced the bosom of a stranger. The tabernacle at Shiloh was the tent God had placed among men, in which God would in very deed dwell with men upon the earth; but when his people treacherously forsook it, he justly forsook it, and then all its glory departed. Israel has small joy of the tabernacle without the presence of God in it. (3.) He gave up all into the hands of the enemy. Those whom God forsakes become an easy prey to the destroyer. The Philistines are sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and no less so to the God of Israel, and yet God will make use of them to be a scourge to his people: (1.) God permits them to take the ark prisoner, and carry it off as a trophy of their victory, to shew that he had not only forsaken the tabernacle, but even the ark itself, which shall be no longer a token of his presence, *ver. 61*. *He delivered his strength into captivity*, as if it had been weakened and overcome, and his glory fell under the disgrace of being abandoned into the enemies hands. We have the story, 1 Sam. iv. 11. When the ark is become as a stranger among Israelites, no marvel if it soon be made a prisoner among Philistines. (2.) He suffers the armies of Israel to be routed by the Philistines, *ver. 62, 63*. *He gave his people over unto the sword*, to the sword of his own justice, and of the enemies rage, for he was wroth with his inheritance; and that wrath of his was the fire which consumed their young men, in the prime of their time, by the sword or sickness, and made such a devastation of them, that *their maidens were not praised*, i. e. *were not given in marriage*, which is honourable in all; because there was no young men for them to be given to; and because the distresses and calamities of Israel were so many and great, that the joys of marriage solemnities were judged unseasonable; and it was said, *Blessed is the womb that beareth not*. General destructions produce a scarcity of men, Isa. xiii. 12. *I will make a man more precious than fine gold*, so that *seven women shall take hold of one man*, Isa. iv. 1. Compare iii. 25. Yet this was not the worst, (3.) Even their priests that attended the ark fell by the sword, Hophni and Phinehas; justly they fell, for they made themselves vile, and were sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and their priesthood was so far from being their protection, that it aggravated their sin, and hastened their fall: And justly did they fall by the sword, because they exposed themselves in the field of battle, without call or warrant; and we throw ourselves out of God's protection, when we go out of our place, and out of the way of our duty. When the priests fell, *their widows made no lamentation*, *ver. 64*. All the ceremonies of mourning were lost and buried in substantial grief; the widow of Phinehas instead of lamenting her husband's death, died herself, when she had called her son Ichabod, 1 Sam. iv. 19.

5. God's return in mercy to them, and his gracious appearances for them after this. We read not of their repentance and return to God, but God was *grieved for the miseries of Israel*, Judg. x. 16. And concerned for his own honour, *fearing the wrath of the enemy, lest they should behave themselves strangely*, Deut. xxxii. 27. And therefore *then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep*, (*ver. 65*.) and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine; not only like one that is raised out of sleep, and recovers himself from the slumber, which by drinking he was overcome with, who then regardeth that which before he seemed wholly to neglect, and to be mindless of; but like one that is refreshed with sleep, and whose heart is made glad, by the sober and moderate use of wine, and is therefore the more lively and vigorous, and fit for business. When God had delivered the ark of his strength into captivity, as one jealous of his honour, he soon put forth the arm of his strength to rescue it; stirred up his strength to do great things for his people.

1. He plagued the Philistines that held the ark in captivity, *ver. 66*. He smote them with emerods in the hinder parts, wounded them behind, as if they were fleeing from him, even then when they thought themselves more than conquerors. He put them to reproach, and they themselves helped to make it a perpetual reproach by the golden images of their emerods, which they returned with the ark for a trespass-offering, 1 Sam. vi. 5. to remain in *perpetuam rei memoriam*. Note, Sooner or later God will glorify himself by putting disgrace upon his enemies, then when they are most elevated with their successes.

2. He provided a new settlement for his ark, after it had been some months in captivity, and some years in obscurity. He did indeed *refuse the tabernacle of Joseph*, he never sent it back to Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, *ver. 67*. The ruins of that place were standing monuments of divine justice, *Go, see what I did to Shiloh*, Jer. vii. 12. But he did not wholly take away the glory from Israel; the moving of the ark, is not the removing of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not; God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, tho' this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Sion, as long after the fall of the Jews, was the riches of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 12. When God *chose not the tribe of Ephraim*, of which tribe Joshua was; but he *chose the tribe of Judah*, *ver. 68*. because of that tribe Jesus was to be, who is greater than Joshua. Kirjath-jearim, the place to which the ark was brought after its rescue out of the hands of the Philistines, was in the tribe of Judah; there it took possession of that tribe; but thence it was removed to Sion, *that mount Sion which he loved*, *ver. 61*. which was *beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth*; there it was that he *built his sanctuary like high places, and like the earth*. David indeed erected only a tent for the ark, but a temple was then designed and prepared for, and finished by his son. And that was, (1.) A very stately place. It was built like the palaces of princes, and the great men of the earth, nay, it excelled them all in splendor and magnificence; Solomon built it, and yet here it is said God built it, for his father had taught him, perhaps, with the reference to this undertaking, that *except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it*, Psal. cxvii. 1. which is a psalm for Solomon. (2.) A very stable place, like the earth: tho' not to continue as long as the earth, yet while it was to continue, it was as firm as the earth, which God *upholds by the word of his power*, and it was not finally destroyed till the gospel-temple was erected, which is to continue as long as the sun and moon endure, Psal. lxxxix. 36, 37. And against which the *gates of hell shall not prevail*.

3. He set a good government over them; a monarchy, and a monarch after his own heart. *He chose David his servant* out of all the thousands of Israel, and put the sceptre into his hand, out of whose loins Christ was to come, and who was to be a type of him, *ver. 70*. Concerning David, observe here,

1. The meanness of his beginning. His extraction indeed was great, for he descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, but his education was poor; he was bred not a scholar, not a soldier, but a shepherd, he was *taken from the sheep-folds*, as Moses was, for God delights to put honour upon the humble and diligent, to raise the poor out of the dust, and to set them among princes; and sometimes finds those most fit for publick action that have spent the beginning of their time in solitude and contemplation. The son of David was upbraided with the obscurity of his original, *Is not this the carpenter?* David was taken, he doth not say, from leading the rams, but from following the ewes, especially those great with young, which intimated that of all the good properties of a shepherd he was most remarkable for his tenderness and compassion to those of his flock that most needed it; this temper of mind fitted him for government; and made him a type of Christ, who, when he feeds his flock like a shepherd, doth with a particular care *gently lead those that are with young*, Isa. xl. 11.

2. The greatness of his advancement. God preferred him to feed Jacob his people, *ver. 71*. It was a great honour God put upon him in advancing him to be a king, especially to be king over Jacob and Israel, God's peculiar people, near and dear to him;

him; but withal it was a great trust reposed in him when he was charged with the conduct of those that were God's own inheritance. God advanced him to the throne that he might feed them, not that he might feed himself; that he might do good, not that he might make his family great. It is the charge given to all the under-shepherds, both magistrates and ministers, that they feed the flock of God.

3. The happiness of his management. David having so great trust put into his hands, obtained mercy of the Lord to be found both skilful and faithful in the discharge of it, *ver. 72. So he fed them, he ruled them, and taught them, guided and protected them* (1.) Very honestly; he did it according to the integrity of his heart, aiming at nothing else but the glory of God, and the good of the people committed to his charge; the principles of his religion were the maxims of his government, which he administered, not with carnal policy, but with *godly sincerity, by the grace of God*. In every thing he did, he meant well, and had no by-end in view. (2.) Very discreetly. He did it by the skilfulness of his hands; he was not only very sincere in what he designed, but very prudent in what he did, and chose out the most proper means in pursuit of his end for his God did instruct him to discretion. Happy the people that are under such a government! And with good reason doth the psalmist make this the finishing, crowning instance of God's favour to Israel, for David was a type of Christ, the great and good shepherd, who was humbled first, and then exalted, and of whom it was foretold, that he should be filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and should judge and reprove with equity, *Isa. xi. 3, 4*. On the integrity of his heart, and the skilfulness of his hands, all his subjects may entirely rely, and of the increase of his government and people there shall be no end.

P S A L M LXXIX.

This psalm, if penned with any particular event in view, is with most probability made to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the woful havock made of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. It is set to the same tune, as I may say, with the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and that weeping prophet borrows two verses out of it, (*ver. 6, 7.*) and makes use of them in his prayer, *Jer. x. 25*. Some think it was penned long before by the spirit of prophecy, prepared for the use of the church, in that cloudy and dark day: Others, that it was penned then by the spirit of prayer, either by a prophet named Asaph, or some other prophet for the sons of Asaph. Whatever the particular occasion was, we have here (1.) A representation of the very deplorable condition that the people of God were in at this time, *ver. 1—5*. (2.) A petition to God for succour and relief; that their enemies might be reckoned with, *ver. 6, 7, 10, 12*. that their sins might be pardoned, *ver. 8, 9*. and that they might be delivered, *ver. 11*. (3.) A plea taken from the readiness of his people to praise him, *ver. 13*. In times of the church's peace and prosperity, this psalm may in the singing of it, give us occasion to bless God that we are not thus trampled on and insulted: But it is especially seasonable in a day of treading down and perplexity, for the exciting of our desires towards God, and the encouragement of our faith in him as the church's patron.

¶ A psalm of Asaph.

1. **O** GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled: they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. 2. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. 3. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem: and there was none to bury them. 4. We are become a reproach to our neighbours: a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. 5. How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

We have here a sad complaint exhibited in the court of heaven: The world is full of complaints, and so is the church too, for it not only suffers with it; but from it; as a lily among thorns. God is complained to, whither should children go with their grievances, but to their father, to such a father as is able and willing to help? The heathen are complained of, who being themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were sworn enemies to it. Tho' they knew not God, nor owned him, yet God having them in a chain, the church very fitly appeals to him against them, for he is King of nations to overrule them, to judge among the heathen, and the King of saints to favour and protect them.

1. They complain here of the anger of their enemies, and the outrageous fury of the oppressor, exerted,

(1.) Against places, *ver. 1*. They did all the mischief they could (1.) To the holy land, they invaded that, and made inroads into it; *The heathen are come into thine inheritance*, to plunder that, and lay it waste. Canaan was dearer to the pious Israelites as it was God's inheritance, than as it was their own; as it was the land in which God was known, and his name was great, than as it was the land in which they were bred and born, and which they and their ancestors had been long in possession of. Note, Injuries done to religion should grieve us more, than even those done to common right; nay, to our own right. We should better bear to see our own inheritance wasted than God's inheritance. This psalmist had mentioned it in the foregoing psalm as an instance of God's great favour to Israel, that he had cast out the heathen before them, *Psal. lxxviii. 55*. But see what a change sin made, now the heathen are suffered to pour in upon them. (2.) To the holy city; *they have laid Jerusalem on heaps*, heaps of rubbish, such heaps as are raised over graves (so some). The inhabitants were buried in the ruins of their own houses, and their dwelling-places became their sepulchres, their long homes. (3.) To the holy house; that sanctuary which God had built like high palaces, and which was thought to be established as the earth, was now laid level with the ground; *thy holy temple have they defiled*, by entering into it, and laying it waste. God's own people had defiled it by their sins, and therefore God suffered their enemies to defile it by their insolence.

(2.) Against persons, against the bodies of God's people, and further their malice could not reach. (1.) They were prodigal of their blood, and killed them without mercy; their eye did not spare, nor did they give any quarter, *ver. 3. Their blood have they shed like water*, wherever they met with them, round about Jerusalem, in all the avenues to the city, whoever went out, or came in, was waited for of the sword. Abundance of human blood was shed, so that the channels of water ran with blood: And they did it with no more reluctance or regret, than if they had spilt so much water, little thinking that every drop of it will be reckoned for in the day when God shall make inquisition for blood. (2.) They were abusive to their dead bodies; when they had killed them, they would let none bury them. Nay, those that were buried, even the dead bodies of God's servants, the flesh of his saints, whose names and memories they had a particular spite at, they digged up again, and gave them to be meat to the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth; or at least, they left those so exposed whom they slew, they hung them in chains, which was in a particular manner grievous to the Jews to see, because God had given them an express law against this, as a barbarous thing, *Deut. xxi. 23*. This inhuman usage of Christ's witnesses is foretold, *Rev. xi. 9*. and thus even the dead bodies were witnesses against their persecutors. This is mentioned (*saith Austin de civ. Dei, lib. 1. cap. xii.*) not as an instance of the misery of the persecuted, for the bodies of the saints shall rise in glory, however they became meat to the birds and the fowls, but of the malice of the persecutors.

(3.) Against their names, *ver. 4. We that survive, are become a reproach to our neighbours*, they all study to abuse us, and load us with contempt, and represent us as ridiculous, or odious, or both; upbraiding us with our sins and with our sufferings, or giving the lie to our relation to God, and expectations from him; so that we are become a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel-Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were counted as the off-scouring of all things.

2. They wonder more at God's anger, *ver. 5*. This they discern in the anger of their neighbours, and this they complain most of, *How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry?* Shall it be for ever? This intimates, that they desired no more, but that God would be reconciled to them, that his anger might be turned away, and then the remainder of men's wrath would be restrained. Note, Those who desire God's favour as better than life, cannot but dread and deprecate his wrath as worse than death.

6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. 7. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place. 8. O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. 9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins for thy names sake. 10. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight, by the revenging of the blood of thy servants *which is shed*. 11. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee, according to the greatness of thy power: preserve thou those that are appointed to die. 12. And render unto our neighbours seven fold into their bosom, the reproach wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. 13. So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

The petitions here put up to God, are very suitable to the present distresses of the church, and they have pleas to enforce them interwoven with them, taken mostly from God's honour.

1. They pray that God would so turn away his anger from them, as to turn it upon those that persecuted and abused them, *ver. 6. Pour out thy wrath, the full vials of it, upon the heathen*; let them wring out the dregs of it and drink them. This prayer is in effect a prophecy, in which the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. Observe here, (1.) The character of those he prays against; they are such as have not known God, nor called upon his name. And the reason why men do not call upon God, is, because they do not know him, how able and willing he is to help them. They that persist in ignorance of God, and neglect of prayer, are the ungodly, who *live without God in the world*. There are kingdoms that know not God, and obey not the Gospel, but neither their multitude, nor their force united, will secure them from his just judgments. (2.) Their crime; *they have devoured of Jacob*, *ver. 7.* And that is crime enough in the account of him, who reckons those that touch his people, touch the apple of his eye. They have not only disturbed, but devoured Jacob; not only encroached upon his dwelling-place, the land of Canaan, but have laid it waste by plundering and depopulating it. (3.) Their condemnation, *Pour out thy wrath upon them*; do not only restrain them from doing further mischief, but reckon with them for the mischief they have done.

2. They pray for the pardon of sin, which they own to be the procuring cause of all their calamities. How unrighteous soever men were, God was righteous in permitting them to do what they did. They pray,

(1.) That God would not *remember against them their former iniquities*, *ver. 8.* Either their own former iniquities, that now they were old, they might not be made to possess the iniquities of their youth. Or, the former iniquities of their people, the sins of their ancestors: In the captivity of Babylon, former iniquities were brought to account; but God promiseth not again to do so, *Jer. xxxi. 29, 30.* and so they pray, Remember not against us our first sins; which some make to look as far back as the golden calf, because that God said, *In the day when I visit, I will visit for this sin of theirs upon them*, *Exod. xxxii. 34.* If the children by repentance and reformation cut off the entail of the parents sin, they may in faith pray, that God will not *remember them against them*. When God pardons sin, he blots it out, and remembers it no more.

(2.) That he would purge away their sins they had been lately guilty of, by the guilt of which their minds and consciences had been defiled. *Deliver us, and purge away our sins*, *ver. 9.* Then deliverances from trouble are granted in love, and our mercies indeed when they are grounded upon the pardon of sin, and flow from that; we should therefore be more earnest with God in prayer for the removal of our sins, than for the removal of our afflictions, and the pardon of them is the foundation and sweetness of our deliverances.

3. They pray, that God would work deliverance and salvation for them, and bring their troubles to a good end, and that speedily; *Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us*, *ver. 8.* They had no hopes but from God's mercies, his tender mercies; their case was so deplorable, that they looked upon themselves as the proper objects of divine compassion; and so near to desperate, that unless divine mercy did speedily interpose to prevent their ruin, they were undone. This whets their importunity, *Lord, help us, Lord, deliver us*; help us under our troubles that we bear them well; help us out of our troubles that the spirit may not fail. Deliver us from sin,

from sinking; three things they plead, (1.) The great distress they were reduced to; *We are brought very low*; and being low, shall be lost, if thou help us not. The lower we are brought, the more need we have of help from heaven, and the more will divine power be magnified in raising us up. (2.) Their dependence upon him; thou art *the God of our salvation*, who alone canst help, *salvation belongeth to the Lord*, and whom we expect help from; for *in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people*. They who make God the God of their salvation shall find him so. (3.) The interest of his own honour in their case; they plead no merit of theirs, they pretend to none, but *help us for the glory of thy name*; pardon us for thy name's sake. The best encouragements in prayer, are those that are taken from God only, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Two things are insinuated in this plea. (1.) That God's name and honour would be greatly injured if he did not deliver them; for those that derided them, blasphemed God, as if he were weak and could not help them, or withdrawn and would not; therefore they plead, *ver. 10. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?* he has forsaken them, and forgotten them; and this they get by worshipping a God whom they cannot see. (*Nil præter nubes & cæli numen adorant. Juv.*) That which was their praise, that they served a God that is every where, was now turned to their reproach and his too, that they served a God that is no where. Lord, say they, make it to appear that thou art, by making it to appear that thou art with us, and for us; that when we are asked, *Where is our God?* we may be able to say, he is nigh unto us in all that which we call upon him for; and you see he is so by what he doth for us. (2.) That God's name and honour would be greatly advanced, if he did deliver them; his mercy would be glorified in delivering them that were so miserable and helpless. By making bare his everlasting arm on their behalf, he would make unto himself an everlasting name; and their deliverance would be a type and figure of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time Messiah the prince would work out, to the glory of God's name.

4. They pray, that God would avenge them on their adversaries, (1.) For their cruelty and barbarity, *ver. 10.* Let the avenging of our blood (according to the ancient law, *Gen. vi. 6.*) be known among the heathen, let them be made sensible that what judgments are brought upon them, are punishments of the wrong they have done to us, and let this be in our sight; and by this means *let God be known among the heathen*, as *the God to whom vengeance belongs*, *Psal. xciv. 1.* and the God that espouseth his peoples cause. Those that have intoxicated themselves with the blood of the saints, shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. (2.) For their insolence and scorn, *ver. 12. Render to them their reproach*. The indignities which by word and deed they have done to the people of God himself, and his name, let them be repayed to them with interest; the reproach wherewith men have reproached us only, we must leave it to God whether he will render it to them or no, and must pray that he would forgive them; but the reproach wherewith they have blasphemed God himself, we may in faith pray, that God would render it seven-fold into their bosoms, so as to strike at their hearts, to humble them, and bring them to repentance. This prayer is a prophecy of the same import with that of Enoch, that God will convince sinners of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, *Jude 15.* and will return them into their own bosoms by everlasting terrors at the remembrance of them.

5. They pray, that God would find out a way for the rescue of his poor prisoners, especially the condemned prisoners, *ver. 11.* The case of their brethren that were fallen into the hands of the enemy, was very sad; they were kept close prisoners, and because they durst not be heard to bemoan themselves, they vented their griefs in deep and silent sighs. All their breathing was sighing, and so was their praying: They were appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, and had received the sentence of death within themselves. This deplorable case the psalmist recommends, (1.) To the divine pity; *Let their sighs come up before thee*, and be thou pleased to take cognizance of their moans. (2.) To the divine power; *According to the greatness of thy arm*, which no creature can contest with, *preserve thou those that are appointed to die*, from the death to which they are appointed. Man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for his people: See *2 Cor. i. 8, 9, 10.*

Lastly, They promise the returns of praise for the answers of prayer, *ver. 13. So we will give thee thanks for ever.* Observe, (1.) How they please themselves with their relation to God; though we are oppressed and brought low, yet we are the sheep of thy pasture, not disowned and cast off by thee for all this; *We are thine, save us*. (2.) How they promise themselves an opportunity of praising God for their deliverance; which they therefore desired, and would bid welcome, because it would furnish them with matter for thanksgiving;

giving, and put their hearts in tune for that excellent work, the work of heaven. (3.) How they oblige themselves not only to give God thanks at present, but to *shew forth his praise unto all generations*, i. e. to do all they could, both to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favours to them, and to engage their posterity to keep up the work of praise. (4.) How they plead this with God; Lord, appear for us against our enemies, for if they get the better, they will *blaspheme thee*, ver. 12. But if we be delivered we will praise thee. Lord, we are that people of thine which thou hast *formed for thyself to shew forth thy praise*; if we be cut off, whence shall that rent, that tribute be raised? Note, Those lives that are entirely devoted to God's praise, are assuredly taken under his protection.

P S A L M LXXX.

This psalm is much to the same purpose with the next foregoing; some think it was penned upon occasion of the desolation and captivity of the ten tribes, as the foregoing psalm of the two. But many were the distresses of the Israel of God, many perhaps which are not recorded in the sacred history, some whereof might give occasion for the drawing up this psalm, which is proper to be sung in the day of Jacob's trouble, and if in singing of it we express a true love to the church, and a hearty concern for its interest, with a firm confidence in God's power to help it out of its greatest distresses, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord. The psalmist here (1.) Begs for the tokens of God's presence with them, and favour to them, ver. 1—3. (2.) He complains of the present rebukes they were under, ver. 4—7. (3.) He illustrates the present desolations of the church, by the comparison of a vine and a vineyard which had flourished, but was now destroyed, ver. 8—16. (4.) He concludes with prayer to God for the preparing of mercy, ver. 17—19. This, as many psalms before and after, relate to the publick interests of God's Israel, which ought to lie nearer to our hearts, than any secular interest of our own.

¶ To the chief musician upon Shoshannin, Eduth,
A psalm of Asaph.

1. **G**IVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. 2. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us. 3. Turn us again, O God: and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. 4. O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? 5. Thou feedest them with the bread of tears: and givest them tears to drink in great measure. 6. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves. 7. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, applies himself to God by prayer, with reference to the present afflicted state of Israel.

1. He intreats God's favour for them, ver. 1, 2. that is all in all to the sanctuary when it is desolate, and is to be sought in the first place. Observe, (1.) How he eyes God in his address: as the shepherd of Israel, whom he had called the *sheep of his pasture*, Psal. lxxix. 13. under whose conduct and care Israel was, as the sheep under the care and conduct of the shepherd. Christ is the great and good shepherd, to whom we may in faith commit the custody of his sheep that were given to him. He *leads Joseph like a flock*, to the best pastures, and out of the way of danger; if Joseph follow him not as obsequiously as the sheep do the shepherd, it is his own fault. He *dwells between the cherubims*, where he is ready to receive petitions, and to give directions; the mercy-seat was between the cherubims, and it is very comfortable in prayer to look up to God as sitting on a throne of grace, and that it is so to us is owing to the great propitiation, for the mercy-seat was the propitiatory. (2.) What he expects and desires from God. That he would give ear to the

cry of their miseries, and of their prayers; that he would shine forth both in his own glory, and in favour and kindness to his people; that he would shew himself and smile on them; that he would stir up his strength, that he would excite it, and exert it: It had seemed to slumber, Lord, awaken it; his cause met with great opposition, and the enemies threatened to over-power it, Lord, put forth thy strength so much the more; and come for salvation to us; be to thy people a powerful help, and a present help. Lord, do this before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, i. e. in the sight of all the tribes of Israel, let them see it to their satisfaction: perhaps, these three tribes are named, because they were the tribes which formed that squadron of the camp of Israel that in their march through the wilderness followed next after the tabernacle; so that before them the ark of God's strength rose to scatter their enemies.

2. He complains of God's displeasure against them; God was angry, and he dreads that more than any thing, ver. 4. (1.) It was great anger; he apprehended that God was angry against the prayer of his people; not only that he was angry notwithstanding their prayers, by which they hoped to turn away his wrath from them; but he was angry with their prayers, tho' they were his own people that prayed: that God should be angry at the sins of his people, and at the prayers of his enemies, is not strange; but that he should be angry at the prayers of his people, is strange indeed. He not only delayed to answer them, that he often doth in love, but he was displeased at them. If he be really angry at the prayers of his people, we may be sure it is because they ask amiss, Jam. iv. 3. They pray, but they do not wrestle in prayer, their ends are not right, or there is some secret sin harboured and indulged in them; they do not lift up pure hands, or with wrath and doubting. But perhaps it is only in their own apprehension; he seems angry with their prayers when really he is not; for thus he will try their patience and perseverance in prayer; as Christ tried the woman of Canaan when he said, *it is not meet to take the childrens bread and cast it to dogs*. (2.) It was anger that had continued a great while. *How long wilt thou be angry?* We have still continued praying, and yet are still under thy frowns.

Now the tokens of God's displeasure which they had been long under, were both their sorrow and shame. (1.) Their sorrow, ver. 5. *Thou feedest them with the bread of tears*, they eat their meat from day to day in tears, this is the vinegar in which they *dip their morsel*, Psal. xlii. 3. They had tears given them to drink, not now and then a taste of that bitter cup, but in great measure. Note, There are many that spend their time in sorrow, who yet shall spend their eternity in joy. (2.) It was their shame, ver. 7. God by frowning upon them made them a strife unto their neighbours, each strove which should expose them most; and such a cheap and easy prey were they made to them, that all the strife was who should have the stripping and plundering of them. Their enemies laughed among themselves to see the frights they were in, the straits they were reduced to, and the disappointments they met with. When God is displeased with his people, we must expect to see them in tears, and their enemies in triumph.

3. He prays earnestly for converting grace in order to their acceptance with God, and their salvation, *turn us again, O God*, ver. 3. *Turn us again, O God of hosts*, ver. 7. and then *cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved*. It is the burthen of the song, for we have it again, ver. 19. They are conscious to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty, and have turned aside into sinful ways, and that was it that provoked God to hide his face from them, and to give them up into the hand of their enemies; and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end; Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then, no doubt, thou wouldst return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance. Observe, (1.) No salvation but from God's favour; *cause thy face to shine*, let us have thy love, and the light of thy countenance, and then we shall be saved. (2.) No obtaining favour with God unless we be converted to him. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then he will cause his face to shine upon us. (3.) No conversion to God but by his own grace; we must frame our doings to turn to him, *Hos. v. 4.* and then pray earnestly for his grace, *turn thou me, and I shall be turned*, pleading that gracious promise, *Prov. i. 23.* *Turn you at my reproof, behold I will pour out my spirit unto you.* The prayer here is for a national conversion; in this method we must pray for national mercies, that what is amiss may be amended, and then our grievances would be soon redressed. National holiness would secure national happiness.

8. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. 9. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. 10. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. 11. She sent out her

her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. 12. Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way, do pluck her? 13. The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild-beast of the field doth devour it. 14. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15. And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself. 16. *It is burnt with fire: it is cut down:* they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. 17. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself. 18. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. 19. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

The psalmist is here presenting his suit for the Israel of God, and pressing it home at the throne of grace, pleading with God for mercy and grace for them. The church is here represented as a vine, *ver. 8, 14.* and a vineyard, *ver. 15.* The root of this vine is Christ, *Rom. xi. 28.* The branches are believers, *Joh. xv. 5.* The church is like a vine, weak, and needing support; unsightly, and having an unpromising outside, but spreading and fruitful, and its fruit most excellent; the church is a choice and noble vine; we have reason to acknowledge the goodness of God, that he has planted such a vine in the wilderness of this world, and preserved it to this day. Now observe here,

1. How the vine of the Old Testament church was planted at first. It was brought out of Egypt with a high hand, the heathen were cast out of Canaan to make room for it; seven nations to make room for that one. Thou didst sweep before it, so some read, *ver. 9.* to make clear work, the nations were swept away as dirt with the besom of destruction. God having made room for it and planted it, he caused it to take deep root by a happy establishment of their government both in church and state; which was so firm, that though their neighbours about them oft attempted it, they could not prevail to pluck it up.

2. How it spread and flourished. (1.) The land of Canaan itself was fully peopled. At first they were not so numerous as to replenish it, *Exod. xxiii. 29.* But in Solomon's time *Judah and Israel were many as the sand of the sea;* the land was filled with them, and yet such a fruitful land that it was not over-stocked, *ver. 1.* The hills of Canaan were covered with their shadow, and the branches, though they extend themselves far like those of the vine, yet were not weak like them, but as strong as those of the goodly cedars; Israel not only had abundance of men, but those mighty men of valour. (2.) They extended their conquests and dominion to the neighbouring countries, *ver. 11.* *She sent out her boughs to the sea,* the great sea west-ward, and *her branches to the river,* to the river of Egypt southward, the river of Damascus northward, or rather, the river Euphrates eastward, *Gen. xv. 18.* Nebuchadnezzar's greatness is represented by a flourishing tree, *Dan. iv. 20, 21.* But it is observable here concerning this vine, that it is praised for its shadow, its boughs and its branches, but not a word of its fruit, for *Israel was an empty vine,* *Hos. x. 1.* God came looking for grapes, but behold wild grapes, *Isa. v. 2.* And if a vine do not bring forth fruit, no tree so useless, so worthless, *Ezek. xv. 2, 6.*

3. How it was wasted and ruined; Lord, thou hast done great things for this vine, and why shall it all be undone again? If it were a plant not of God's planting, it were not strange to see it rooted up: but shall God desert and abandon that which he himself gave being to? *ver. 12.* *Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?* There was a good reason for this change in God's way towards them; this noble vine was become *the degenerate plant of a strange vine,* (*Jer. ii. 21.*) to the reproach of its great owner, and then no marvel if he *took away its hedge,* *Isa. v. 5.* yet God's former favours to this vine, are urged as pleas in prayer to God, and improved as encouragements to faith, that for all this God would not wholly cast them off. Observe (1.) The malice and enmity of the Gentile nations against Israel; as soon as ever God *broke down their hedges* and left them exposed, troops of enemies presently broke in upon them, that waited for an opportunity to destroy them. They that passed by the way had a pluck at them; the *boar out of the wood,* and the *wild beast of the field* were ready to ravage it, *ver. 13.* But (2.) See also the restraint which these cruel enemies were under, for till God had *broke down their hedges,* they could not pluck a leaf of this vine: the devil could not hurt Job, so long as God continued the *hedge round about him,* *Job i. 10.* See how much it is the interest of any people to keep themselves in the favour of God, and then they need not fear any wild beast of the field, (*Job v. 23.*) But

if we provoke God to withdraw, *our defence is departed from us* and we are undone. The deplorable state of Israel is described, where, *ver. 16.* *It is burnt with fire, it is cut down;* the people are treated like thorns and briars, that are nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned; and no longer like vines that are protected and cherished, they perish not through the rage of the wild beast and the boar, but *at the rebuke of thy countenance;* that was it which they dreaded, and to which they attributed all their calamities. It is well or ill with us according as we are under God's smiles or frowns.

4. What their requests were to God hereupon.

1. That God would help the vine; *ver. 14, 15.* that he would graciously take cognizance of its case, and do for it as he thought fit. *Return, we beseech thee, O Lord of hosts,* for thou hast seemed to go away from us. *Look down from heaven,* to which thou hast retired; from heaven, that place of prospect, whence thou seest all the wrongs that are done us; that place of power, whence thou canst send effectual relief; from heaven, where thou hast prepared thy throne of judgment, to which we appeal; and where thou hast prepared a better country for those that are Israelites indeed: thence give a gracious look, thence make a gracious visit to this vine. Take our woful condition into thy compassionate consideration, and for the particular fruits of thy pity, we refer ourselves to thee. Only behold the vineyard, or rather the root, which *thy right hand hath planted,* and which therefore we hope thy right hand will protect; that *branch which thou madest strong for thyself,* to shew forth thy praise, *Isa. xliii. 21.* that with the fruit of it thou mightest be honoured. Lord, it is formed by thyself, and for thyself, and therefore it may with an humble confidence be committed to thyself, and to thine own care; *As for God, his work is perfect.* What we read the branch, in the Hebrew is the son (*Ben*) whom in thy counsel thou hast made strong for thyself. That branch was to come out of the stock of Israel, *My servant, the branch;* *Zech. iii. 8.* And therefore till he was come, Israel in general, and the house of David, in particular, must be preserved and upheld, and kept in being: *He is the true vine,* *Joh. xv. 1.* *Isa. xi. 1.* *destroy it not, for that a blessing is in it,* *Isa. lxxv. 8.*

2. That he would help the vine-dresser, *ver. 17, 18.* *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand;* that king (whoever it was) of the house of David, that was now to go in and out before them; let thy hand be upon him, not only to protect and cover him, but to own him, and strengthen him, and give him success. We have this phrase, *Ezr. vii. 28.* *And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me.* Their king is called the *man of God's right hand,* as he was the representative of their state, which was dear to God, as his Benjamin, the *son of his right-hand;* and as he was president in their affairs, and an instrument in God's right hand of much good to them, defending them from themselves and from their enemies, and directing them in the right-way; and under-shepherd under him who was the great Shepherd of Israel. Princes that have power, must remember that they are sons of men, of Adam, so the word is; that if they are strong, it is God that hath made them strong, and he has made them so for himself, for they are his ministers to serve the interests of his kingdom among men; which if they do in sincerity, *his hand shall be upon them,* and we should pray in faith that it may be so; adding this promise, that if God will adhere to our governors, we will adhere to him, *so will not we go back from thee;* we will never desert a cause which we see that God espouseth, and is the patron of. Let God be our leader, and we will follow him. Adding also this prayer, quicken us, put life into us, revive our dying interests, revive our drooping spirits, and then *we will call upon thy name.* We will continue to do so, upon all occasions, having found it not in vain to do so. We cannot call upon God's name in a right manner, unless he quicken us; but it is he puts life into our souls, that puts liveliness into our prayers.

But many interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, apply this to the Messiah, the son of David, the protector and Saviour of the church, and the keeper of the vineyard. (1.) He is the man of God's right hand; to whom he hath *sworn by his right hand* (so the Chaldee); whom he has exalted to his right hand, and who is indeed his right hand, the arm of the Lord, for all power is given to him. (2.) He is that son of man whom he *made strong for himself,* for the glorifying of his name, and the advancing of the interests of his kingdom among men. (3.) God's hand is upon him throughout his whole undertaking, to bear him out, and carry him on, to protect and animate him, that the *good pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand.* (4.) The stability and constancy of believers is entirely owing to that grace and strength which is laid up for us in Jesus Christ. *Psal. lxxviii. 28.* In him is our strength found, by which we are enabled to persevere to the end: Let thy hand be upon him, on him let our help be laid, who is mighty, let him be made able to save to the uttermost, and that will be our security, *So will not we go back from thee.*

Lastly, The psalm concludes with the same petition that had been put up twice before, and yet it is no vain repetition, *ver. 19. Turn us again.* The title given to God rises, *ver. 3. O God ver. 7. O God of hosts. ver. 19. O Lord (Jehovah) God of hosts.* When we come to God for his grace, his good will towards us, and his good work in us, we should pray earnestly, continue instant in prayer, and pray more earnestly.

P S A L M LXXXI.

This psalm was penned, as is supposed, not upon occasion of any particular providence, but for the solemnity of a particular ordinance, either that of the new-moon in general, or that of the feast of trumpets, on the new-moon of the 7th month, *Lev. xxiii. 24. Numb. xxix. 1.* When David by the Spirit, introduced the singing of psalms into the temple-service, this psalm was intended for that day, to excite and assist the proper devotions of it. All the psalms are profitable; but if one psalm be more suitable than another to the day, and the observances of it, we should chuse that. The two great intentions of our religious assemblies, and which we ought to have in our eye, in our attendance on them, are answered in this psalm, which are to give glory to God, and to receive instruction from God; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple: Accordingly, by this psalm, we are assisted on our solemn feast-days (1.) In praising God, for what he is to his people, *ver. 1—3. and has done for them, ver. 4—7.* (2.) In teaching and admonishing one another, concerning the obligations we lie under to God, *ver. 8—10. The danger of revolting from him, ver. 11, 12. And the happiness we should have if we would but keep close to him, ver. 13—16.* This, tho' speaking primarily of Israel of old, is written for our learning, and is therefore to be sung with application.

¶ To the chief musician upon Gittith,
A psalm of Asaph.

1. SING aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. 3. blow up the trumpet in the new-moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast-day. 4. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. 5. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out thro' the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not. 6. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. 7. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

When the people of God were gathered together in the solemn day, the day of the feast of the Lord, they must be told that they had business to do, for we do not go to church to sleep, or to be idle; no, there is that which the duty of every day requires; work of the day which is to be done in its day. And here,

1. The worshippers of God are excited to their work; and are taught, by singing this psalm, to stir up both themselves, and one another to it, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* Our errand is, to give unto God the glory due unto his name, and in all our religious assemblies we must mind this as our business; (1.) In doing this we must eye God as our strength, and and as the God of Jacob, *ver. 1.* He is the strength of Israel, as a people, for he is a God in covenant with them, that will powerfully protect, support, and deliver them, that fights their battles, and makes them to do valiantly, and victoriously. He is the strength of every Israelite, by his grace we are enabled to go through all our services, sufferings, and conflicts; and to him, as our strength, we must both pray, and sing praise to him, as the God of all the wrestling seed of Jacob, with whom we have a spiritual communion. (2.) We must do this by all the expressions of holy joy and triumph. It was then to be done by musical instruments, the timbrel, harp, and psaltery; and by blowing the trumpet, some think, in remembrance of the sound of the trumpet on mount Sinai, which waxed louder and louder; it was then, and is now to be done, by singing of psalms, singing aloud, and making a joyful noise. The pleasantness of the harp, and the awfulness of the trumpet, intimate to us that God is to be worshipped with cheerfulness and holy joy, with reverence

and godly fear. Singing aloud, and making a noise, intimates that we must be warm and affectionate in praising God; that we must with a hearty good-will shew forth his praise, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence on him, and obligations to him; and that we should join many together in this work, the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. (3.) This must be done in the time appointed: No time amiss for praising God, *seven times a day will I praise thee; nay, at midnight will I rise and give thanks unto thee;* but some are times appointed, not for God to meet us, he is always ready, but for us to meet one another, that we may join together in praising God. The solemn feast-day must be a day of praise, when we are receiving the gifts of God's bounty, and rejoicing in them, then it is proper to sing his praises.

2. They are here directed in their work.

1. They must look up to the divine institution, which it is the observation of; in all religious worship we must have an eye to the command, *ver. 4. This was a statute for Israel,* for the keeping up of a face of religion among them, it was a law of the God of Jacob, which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to. Note, Praising God is not only a good thing which we may do well to do, but it is our indispensable duty, which we are obliged to do; it is at our peril if we neglect it; and in all religious exercises we must have an eye to the institution, as our warrant and rule; this I do, because God has commanded me; and therefore I hope he will accept me; then it is done in faith.

2. They must look back upon those operations of divine providence, which it is the memorial of. This solemn service was ordained for a testimony, *ver. 5.* a standing traditional evidence; for the attesting of the matters of fact: It was a testimony to Israel, that they might know and remember what God had done for their fathers, and would be a testimony against them, if they should be ignorant of them, and forget them.

1. The psalmist in the peoples name puts himself in mind of the general work of God on Israel's behalf, which was kept in remembrance by this and other solemnities, *ver. 5.* When God went out against the land of Egypt, to lay it waste, that he might force Pharaoh to let Israel go; then he ordained solemn feast-days to be observed by a statute for ever in their generations, as a memorial of it, particularly the passover (which perhaps is meant by the solemn feast-day, *ver. 3.*) That was appointed just then when God went out through the land of Egypt, to destroy the first-born, and passed over the houses of the Israelites, *Exod. xii. 23, 24.* And by it that work of wonder was to be kept in perpetual remembrance, that all ages might in it behold the goodness and severity of God. The psalmist, speaking for his people, takes notice of this aggravating circumstance of their slavery in Egypt, that there they heard a language that they understood not, there they were strangers in a strange land; the Egyptians and the Hebrews understood not one another's language, for Joseph spake to his brethren by an interpreter, *Gen. xlii. 23.* and the Egyptians are said to be to the house of Jacob a people of a strange language, *Psal. cxiv. 1.* To make a deliverance appear the more gracious, the more glorious, it is good to observe every thing that makes the trouble we are delivered from, appear the more grievous.

2. The psalmist, in God's name, puts the people in mind of some of the particulars of their deliverance; here he changeth the person, *ver. 6.* God speaks by him, saying, *I removed his shoulder from the burthen.* Let him remember this on the feast-day, (1.) That God had brought them out of the house of bondage; had removed their shoulder from the burthen of oppression, under which they are ready to sink; had delivered their hands from the pots, or panniers, or baskets, in which they carried clay or bricks. Liberty out of slavery is a very sensible mercy, and which ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. But this was not all, (2.) God had delivered them at the Red-sea; then they called in trouble, and he rescued them, and disappointed the designs of their enemies against them, *Exod. xiv. 10.* Then he answered them with a real answer, out of the secret place of thunder, *i. e.* out of the pillar of fire, through which God looked upon the host of the Egyptians, and troubled it, *Exod. xiv. 25.* Or, it may be meant of the giving of the law, at mount Sinai, which was the secret place, for it was death to gaze, *Exod. xix. 21.* and it was in thunder that God then spake. Even the terrors of Sinai, were favours to Israel, *Deut. iv. 33.* (3.) God had born their manners in the wilderness; *I proved thee at the waters of Meribah,* *i. e.* Thou didst there shew thy temper, what an unbelieving murmuring people thou wast, and yet I continued my favour to thee, *Selah;* mark that; compare God's goodness, and man's badness, and they will serve as foils to each other. Now if they on their solemn feast-days, were thus to call to mind their redemption out of Egypt, much more ought we on the Christian sabbath to call to mind a more glorious redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, from worse than Egyptian bondage; and the many gracious answers he hath given to us, notwithstanding our manifold provocations.

8. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; 9. There shall no strange god be in thee: neither shalt thou worship any strange god. 10. I am the LORD thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. 11. But my people would not hearken to my voice: and Israel would none of me. 12. So I gave them up unto their own hearts lust: and they walked in their own counsels. 13. O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! 14. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. 15. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. 16. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

God, by the psalmist, here speaks to Israel, and in them to us, on whom the ends of the world are come.

1. He demands their diligent and serious attention to what he was about to say, *ver. 8. Hear, O my people*, and who should hear me, if my own people will not? I have heard and answered thee, now wilt thou hear me? Hear what is said with the greatest solemnity, and the most unquestionable certainty, for it is what I will testify unto thee. Do not only give me the hearing, but hearken unto me, *i. e.* be advised by me, be ruled by me. Nothing could be more reasonably or more justly expected, and yet God puts an *if* upon it; *If thou wilt hearken unto me*. It is thine interest to do so, and yet it is questionable whether thou wilt or no, for thy neck is an iron sinew.

2. He puts them in mind of their obligation to him, as the Lord their God, and Redeemer, *ver. 10. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt*; which is the preface to the ten commandments, and a powerful reason for the keeping of them, shewing that we are bound to it in duty, interest, and gratitude, all which bonds we break asunder if we be disobedient.

3. He gives them an abstract both of the precepts and of the promises which he gave them as the Lord, and their God, upon their coming out of Egypt. (1.) The great command was, that they should have no other gods before him, *ver. 9. There shall no strange god be in thee*, none beside thine own God. Other gods might well be called strange gods, for it was very strange that ever any people, who had the true and living God for their God, should hanker after any other. God is jealous in this matter, for he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; and therefore in this matter they must be circumspect, *Exod. xxiii. 13.* (2.) The great promise was, that God himself, as a God all-sufficient, would be nigh unto them in all that which they called upon him for, *Deut. iv. 7.* That if they would adhere to him as their powerful protector and ruler, they should always find him their bountiful benefactor. Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it, as the young ravens that cry, open their mouths wide, and the old ones fill them. See here (1.) What is our duty; to raise our expectations from God, and enlarge our desires towards him. We cannot look for too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. We are not straitened in him, and therefore why should we be straitened in our own bosoms? (2.) What is God's promise; I will fill thy mouth with good things, *Psal. ciii. 5.* There is enough in God to fill our treasures, *Prov. viii. 21.* to replenish every hungry soul, *Jer. xxxi. 25.* to supply all our wants, to answer all our desires, and to make us compleatly happy. The pleasures of sense will surfeit and never satisfy. (*Isa. lv. 2.*) Divine pleasures will satisfy, and never surfeit. And we may have enough from God, if we pray for it in faith: *Ask and it shall be given you; he gives liberally, and upbraideth not.* God assured his people Israel, that it should be their own fault, if he did not do as great and kind things for them, as he had done for their fathers. Nothing should have been thought too good, too much to give them, if they would but have kept close to God: He would moreover have given them such and such things, *2 Sam. xii. 8.*

4. He chargeth them with a high contempt of his authority as their law-giver, and his grace and favour as their benefactor, *ver. 11.* He had done much for them, and designed to do more; but all in vain, *my people would not hearken to my voice*, but turned a deaf ear to all I said. Two things he complains of, (1.) Their disobedience to his commands, they did hear his voice, so as never any people did; but they would not hearken to it, they would not be ruled by it, neither by the law, nor by the reason of it. (2.) Their dislike of his covenant-relation to them, *they would none of me*. They ac-

quiesced not in my word (so the Chaldee). God was willing to be to them a God, but they were not willing to be to him a people, they did not like his terms. I would have gathered them, but they would not. They had none of him, and why had they not? It was not because they might not, they were fairly invited into covenant with God; it was not because they could not, for the word was nigh them, even in their mouth and in their heart; but it was purely because they would not: God calls them his people, for they were bought by him, bound to him, his, by a thousand ties, and yet even they have not hearkened, have not obeyed; Israel, the seed of Jacob my friend, set me at short, and would have none of me. Note, All the wickedness, of the wicked world, is owing to the willfulness of the wicked will. The reason why people are not religious, is because they will not be so.

5. He justifies himself with this in the spiritual judgments he had brought upon them, *ver. 12. So I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts*, which would be more dangerous enemies, and more mischievous oppressors to them, than any of the neighbouring nations ever were. God withdrew his Spirit from them, took off the bridle of restraining grace, left them to themselves, and justly; they will do as they will, and therefore let them do as they will: *Ephraim is joyned to idols, let him alone*. It is a righteous thing with God to give these up to their own hearts lusts that indulge them, and give up themselves to be led by them, for why should his Spirit always strive? His grace is his own, and he is debtor to no man, and yet as he never gave his grace to any that could say they deserved it; so he never took it away from any; but such as had first forfeited it. *They would none of me, so I gave them up*, let them take their course; and see what follows, they walked in their own counsels; in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eye, both in their worships, and in their conversations: I left them to do as they would, and then they did all that was ill; they walked in their own counsels, and not according to the counsels of God, and his advice. God therefore was not the author of their sin, he left them to the lusts of their own hearts, and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well, the blame must lie upon their own hearts, and the blood upon their own heads.

6. He testifies his good will to them, in wishing they had done well for themselves. He saw how sad their case was, and how sure their ruin, when they were delivered up to their own lusts; that is worse than being given up to Satan, that may be in order to reformation, *1 Tim. i. 20.* and to salvation, *1 Cor. v. 5.* But to be delivered up to our own hearts lusts, is to be sealed under condemnation: He that is filthy let him be filthy, still; what fatal precipices will not these hurry a man to? Now, here God looks upon them with pity: and shews that it was with reluctance that he thus abandoned them to their folly and fate; *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* *Hos. xi. 8, 9.* So here, *O that my people had hearkened!* see *Isa. xlviii. 18.* Thus Christ lamented the obstinacy of Jerusalem, *If thou hadst known*, *Luke xix. 41.* The expressions here are very affecting, *ver. 13, 14, 15, 16.* designed to shew (1.) How unwilling God is, that any should perish, and desirous that all should come to repentance: He delights not in the ruin of sinful persons or nations. (2.) What enemies sinners are to themselves, and what an aggravation it will be of their misery, that they might have been happy upon such easy terms.

Observe here, 1. The great mercy God had in store for his people, and which he would have wrought for them if they had been obedient. (1.) He would have given them victory over their enemies, and would soon have compleated the reduction of them. They should not only have kept their ground, but have gained their point against the remaining Canaanites, and their encroaching vexatious neighbours, *ver. 14. I should have subdued their enemies*, and it is God only that is to be depended on for the subduing our enemies. Nor would he have put them to the expence and fatigue of a tedious war, he would soon have done it; for he would have turned his hand against their adversaries, and then they had not been able to stand before them. It intimates how easily he would have done it, and without any difficulty; with the turn of a hand; *Nay, with the breath of his mouth shall he slay the wicked*, *Isa. xi. 4.* If he but turn his hand, the haters of the Lord will submit themselves to him, *ver. 15.* And tho' they are not brought to love him, yet they shall be made to fear him, and to confess that he is too hard for them, and it is in vain to contend with him. God is honoured, and so is his Israel, by the submission of those that have been in rebellion against them, tho' it be but a forced and feigned submission. (2.) He would have confirmed and perpetuated their posterity, and established it upon sure and lasting foundations. In despite of all the attempts of their enemies against them, their time should have endured for ever, and they should never have been disturbed in the possession of the good land God had given them, much less evicted, and turned out of all possession. (3.) He would have given them great plenty of all good things, *ver. 16. He should have fed them with the finest of the wheat*, with the best grain, and best of

of the kind. Wheat was the staple-commodity of Canaan, and they exported a deal of it, *Ezek. xxvii. 17.* He would not only have provided for them the best sort of bread, but with *honey out of the rock would he have satisfied them.* Besides the precious products of the fruitful soil, that there might not be a barren spot in all their land, even the clefts of the rock should serve for beehives, and in them they should find honey in abundance, see *Deut. xxxii. 13, 14.* In short, God designed to make them every way easy and happy.

2. The duty God required from them as the condition of all this mercy. He expected no more but that they should hearken to him, as a scholar to his teacher, to receive his instructions; as a servant to his master, to receive his commands; and that they should walk in his ways, those ways of the Lord which are right and pleasant, that they should observe the institutions of his ordinances, and attend the intimations of his providence; and there was nothing unreasonable in this.

3. Observe how the reason of the withholding of the mercy is laid in their neglect of the duty. If they had *hearkened to me, I would soon have subdued their enemies.* Note, National sin and disobedience is the great and only thing that retards and obstructs national salvation and deliverance. *When I would have healed Israel, and set every thing to rights among them, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered,* and so a stop was put to the cure, *Hos. vii. 1.* We are apt to say, if such a method had been taken, such an instrument employed, we should soon have subdued our enemies; but we mistake: if we had hearkened to God, and kept to our duty, the thing had been done, but it is sin that makes our troubles long, and salvation slow. And this is that which God himself complains of, and wisheth it had been otherwise. Note, Therefore God would have us do our duty to him, that we may be qualified to receive favour from him. He therefore delights in our serving him, not because he is the better for it, but because we shall.

P S A L M LXXXII.

This psalm is calculated for the meridian of princes courts, and courts of justice, not in Israel only, but in other nations; yet, it was probably penned primarily for the use of the magistrates of Israel, the great Sanhedrim, and others their elders that were in places of power, and, perhaps, by David's direction. This psalm is designed to make kings wise, and to instruct the judges of the earth, as *Psal. ii. 10.* to tell them their duty, as *2 Sam. xxii. 3.* and tell them of their faults, as *Psal. lviii. 1.* We have here, (1.) The dignity of magistracy, and its dependence upon God, ver. 1. (2.) The duty of magistrates, ver. 3, 4. (3.) The degeneracy of bad magistrates, and the mischief they do, ver. 2, 5. (4.) Their doom read, ver. 6, 7. (5.) The desire and prayer of all good people, that the kingdom of God may be set up more and more, ver. 8. Tho' magistrates may most closely apply this psalm to themselves, yet we may any of us sing it with understanding, when we give glory to God, in singing of it, as presiding in all publick affairs, providing for the protection of injured innocency, and ready to punish the most powerful injustice, and when we comfort ourselves with the belief of his present government, and with the hopes of his future judgment.

¶ A psalm of Asaph.

1. **G**OD standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods. 2. How long will he judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. 3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. 5. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

We have here,

1. God's supreme presidency and power in all councils, and courts, asserted and laid down, as a great truth, necessary to be believed both by princes and subjects, ver. 1. *God stands,* as chief director in the congregation of the mighty, the mighty One, (*in cætu fortis*) in the councils of the prince, the supreme magistrate, and he judgeth among the gods, the inferior magistrates; both the legislative, and the executive power of princes is under

his eye, and his hand. Observe here, (1.) The power and honour of magistrates, they are the mighty; they are so in authority, for the publick good; it is a great power that they are intrusted with, and they ought to be so in wisdom and courage. They are in the Hebrew dialect called gods; the same word is used for these subordinate governors, that is used for the sovereign ruler of the world. They are *Elohim*; angels are so called, both because they are great in power and might, and because God is pleased to make use of their service in the government of this lower world; and magistrates in an inferior capacity are likewise the ministers of his providence in general, for the keeping up of order and peace in human societies, and particularly of his justice and goodness in punishing evil doers, and protecting them that do well. Good magistrates that answer the ends of magistracy, are as God; some of his honour is put upon them, they are his vice-gerents, and great blessings to any people; *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king,* Prov. xvi. 10. But as *roaring lions, and ranging bears,* so are *wicked rulers over the poor people,* Prov. xxviii. 15. (2.) A good form and constitution of government intimated, and that is a mixed monarchy, like ours; here is the mighty one, the sovereign, and here is his congregation, his privy-council, his parliament, his bench of judges, who are called the gods. (3.) God's incontestible sovereignty maintained in and over all the congregations of the mighty. God stands, he judgeth among them, *i. e.* they have their power from him, and are accountable to him; *by him kings reign.* He is present at all their debates, and inspects all they say and do, and what is said and done amiss will be called over again, and they reckoned with, for their male-administrations. God has their hearts in his hands, and their tongues too, and he directs them *which way soever he will,* Prov. xxi. 1. So that he has a negative voice in all their resolves, and his counsels shall stand whatsoever devices raise in mens hearts; he makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes and designs by them, tho' little doth their heart think so, *Isa. x. 7.* Let magistrates consider this, and be awed by it, God is with them in the judgment, *2 Chron. i. 6.* *Deut. xix. 17.* Let subjects consider this, and be comforted with it; for good princes, and good judges, that mean well, are under a divine direction, and bad ones that mean never so ill, are under a divine restraint.

2. A charge given to all magistrates to do good with their power, as they will answer it to him by whom they are intrusted with it, ver. 3, 4. (1.) They are to be the protectors of those that lie exposed to injury, and the patrons of those that want advice and assistance. Defend the poor that have no money wherewith to make friends, or fee council. And the fatherless, that while they are young and unable to help themselves, have lost those that would have been the guides of their youth. Magistrates, as they must be fathers to their country in general, so particularly to those in it that are fatherless; are called the gods. Herein they must be followers of him, they must be *fathers of the fatherless.* Job was so, *Job xxix. 13.* (2.) They are to administer justice impartially, and do right to the afflicted and needy, who being weak and helpless, have often wrongs done them; and will be in danger of losing all, if magistrates do not *ex officio,* interpose for their relief. If a poor man has an honest cause, his poverty must be no prejudice to his cause, how great and powerful soever those are that contend with him. (3.) They are to rescue those that are already fallen into the hands of oppressors and deliver them, ver. 4. *rid them out of the hand of the wicked, avenge them of their adversary,* Luke xviii. 3. These are clients that there is nothing to be got by, no pay for serving them, no interest by obliging them, yet these are they whom judges and magistrates must concern themselves for, whose comfort they must consult, and whose cause they must espouse.

3. A charge drawn up against bad magistrates, that neglect their duty, and abuse their power, forgetting that God standeth among them, ver. 2, 5. Observe, (1.) What the sin is they are here charged with; they judge unjustly contrary to the rules of equity, and the dictates of their consciences; giving judgment against those that have right on their side, out of malice and ill-will; or, for those that have an unrighteous cause, out of favour and partial affection. To do unjustly is bad, but to judge unjustly is much worse, because it is doing wrong under colour of right; against such acts of injustice there is least fence for the injured, and by them encouragement is given to the injurious. It was as great an evil as any Solomon saw under the sun, when he observed *the place of judgment that iniquity was there,* Eccl. iii. 16. *Isa. v. 7.* They not only accepted the persons of the rich, because they were rich, tho' that is bad enough; but which is much worse, they *accepted the persons of the wicked,* because they were wicked; they not only countenance them in their wickedness, but loved them the better for it, and fell in with their interests. Wo unto thee, O land, when thy judges are such as these.

(2.) What was the cause of this sin. They were told plainly enough that it was their office and duty to protect and deliver the

the poor, it was many a time given them in charge, yet they judge unjustly, for *they know not, neither will they understand*. They do not care to hear their duty, they will not take pains to study it, they have no desire to take things right, but are governed by interest, not by reason or justice; *a gift in secret blinds their eyes*. They know not, because they will not understand; none so blind as those that will not see. They have baffled their own consciences, and so they walk on in darkness, not knowing or caring what they do, or whether they go. They that walk on in darkness, are walking on to everlasting darkness.

(3.) What was the consequences of this sin, *all the foundations of the earth*, or of the land, are out of course; when justice is perverted, what good can be expected? *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved*, as the psalmist speaks in a like case, *Pfal. lxxv. 3*. The miscarriages of publick persons are publick mischiefs.

6. I have said, *Ye are gods*: and all of you are children of the most High. 7. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. 8. Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

We have here,

1. Earthly gods abased and brought down, *ver. 6, 7*. The dignity of their character is acknowledged, *ver. 6*. *I have said, Ye are gods*. They have been honoured with the name and title of gods, God himself called them so in the statute against treasonable words, *Exod. xxii. 28*. *Thou shalt not revile the gods*. And if they have this title from the fountain of honour, who can dispute it? But what is man, that he should be thus magnified? He called them gods, because *unto them the word of God came*, so our service expounds it, *John x. 35. i. e.* they had a commission from God, and were delegated and appointed by him to be the shield of the earth, the conservators of the publick peace, and revengers to execute wrath upon those that disturb it, *Rom. xiii. 4*. All of them are in this sense children of the most High, God has put some of his honour upon them, and employs them in his providential government of the world, as David made his sons chief rulers. Or because, *I said, ye are gods*, you have carried the honour further than was intended, and have imagined yourselves to be the children of the most High, as the king of Babylon, *Isa. xiv. 14*. *I will be like the most High*, and the king of Tyre, *Ezek. xxviii. 2*. *Thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God*. It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it, and puffed up with it, and so think of themselves above what is meet. But here follows a mortifying consideration, *ye shall die like men*. This may be taken either, (1.) As the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, and by their mis-rules put the foundations of the earth out of course; God will reckon with them, and will cut them off in the midst of their pomp and prosperity; they shall die like other wicked men, and fall like one of the heathen princes, and their being Israelites shall not secure them, no more than their being judges; or like one of the angels that sinned; or like one of the giants of the old world. Compare this with that which Elihu observed concerning the mighty oppressors in his time, *Job xxxiv. 26*. *He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others*. Let those that abuse their power know that God will take both it and their lives from them, for wherein they deal proudly, he will *shew himself above them*. Or, (2.) As the period of the glory of all magistrates in this world; let them not be puffed up with their honour, or neglect their work, but let the consideration of their mortality, be both mortifying to their pride, and quickning to their duty. Ye are called gods, but ye have no patent for immortality, *ye shall die like men*, like common men, and like one of them, *ye, O princes, shall fall*. Note, Kings and princes, old judges of the earth, tho' they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust. *Mors sceptris lignibus æque*.

2. The God of heaven exalted and raised high, *ver. 8*. The psalmist finds it to little purpose to reason with these proud oppressors, they turned a deaf ear to all her seed, and walk on in darkness, and therefore he looks up to God, appeals to him, and begs of him to *take unto himself his great power*; *arise, O God, judge the earth*; and when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it, *thou shalt inherit all nations*. This has respect, (1.) To the kingdom of providence; God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom he pleaseth, he inherits all nations, has an absolute dominion over them, to dispose of them as a man doth of his inheritance, this we are to believe, and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much into the hands of the wicked, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is, *Job ix. 24*. But God has re-

served the power to himself, and over-rules them. In this faith we must pray, *Arise, O God, judge the earth*, appear against those that judge unjustly, and set shepherds over thy people after thine own heart. There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend, for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges. (2.) It has respect to the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastning of that, that Christ would come who is to judge the earth, and that promise is pleaded, that God shall give him the heathen for his inheritance; thou, O Christ, shalt inherit all nations, and be the governor over them, *Pfal. ii. 8. — xxii. 28*. Let the second coming of Christ set to rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves, and one another; in reference to the mismanagements of power among men, one is, *Rev. xix. 6*. *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*; the other is, *Rev. xxii. 20*. *Surely, I come quickly*.

P S A L M LXXXIII.

This psalm is the last of those that go under the name of Asaph; It is penned, as most of those, upon a publick account, with reference to the insults of the church's enemies, that sought its ruin; some think it was penned upon occasion of the threatening descent which was made upon the land of Judah in Jehoshaphat's time, by the Moabites and Ammonites, those children of Lot here spoken of, *ver. 8*. who were at the head of the alliance, and to whom all the other states here mentioned, were auxiliaries: We have the story, *2 Chron. xx. 1*. where it is said, the children of Moab and Ammon, and others besides them, invaded the land. Others think, it was penned with reference to all the confederacies of the neighbour nations against Israel, from first to last. The psalmist here makes an appeal and application, (1.) To God's knowledge, by a remonstrance of their designs and endeavours to destroy Israel, *ver. 1—8*. (2.) To God's justice and jealousy both for his church, and for his own honour, by an earnest prayer for the defeat of their attempt, that the church might be preserved, the enemies humbled, and God glorified, *ver. 9—18*. This, in the singing of it, we may apply to the enemies of the gospel-church, all anti-christian powers and factions, representing to God their confederacies against Christ and his kingdom, and rejoicing in hopes that all their projects will be baffled, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

A song or psalm of Asaph.

1. **K** E E P not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. 2. For lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee, have lift up the head. 3. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. 4. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation: that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. 5. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee. 6. The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites: of Moab, and the Hagarenes. 7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre. 8. Assur is also joyned with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

The Israel of God was now in danger and fear, and great distress; and yet their prayer is called, *A song or psalm*, for singing psalms is not unseasonable, no not when the harps are hung upon the willow-trees.

1. The psalmist here begs of God to appear on the behalf of his injured threatened people, *ver. 1*. *Keep not thou silence, O God*, but give judgment for us against those that do us an apparent wrong. Thus Jehoshaphat prayed upon occasion of that invasion, *2 Chron. xx. 11*. *Behold how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession*. Sometimes God seems to connive at the unjust treatment which is given to his people, he keeps silence, as one that either did not observe it, or did not concern himself in it; he holds his peace, as if he would observe an exact neutrality,

neutrality, and let them fight it out; he is still, and gives not the enemies of his people any disturbance or opposition, but seems to sit by *as a man astonished, or as a mighty man that cannot save.* Then he gives us leave to call upon him, as here, *Keep not thou silence, O God.* Lord, speak to us by thy prophets for our encouragement against our fears, as he did in reference to that invasion, 2 Chron. xx. 14. Lord, speak for us by thy providence, and speak against our enemies; speak deliverance to us, and disappointment to them. God's speaking is his acting; for with him saying and doing are the same thing.

2. He here gives an account of the grand alliance of the neighbour nations against Israel, which he begs of God to break, and blast the projects of.

Now observe here,

1. Against whom this confederacy is formed; it is against the Israel of God, and so in effect against the God of Israel. Thus the psalmist takes care to interest God in their cause, not doubting, but that if it appeared that they were for God, God would make it to appear he was for them, and then they might set all their enemies at defiance; for who then could be against them? Lord, saith he, they are thine enemies, and they hate thee. All wicked people are God's enemies, the *carnal mind is enmity against God*, but especially wicked persecutors; they hated the religious worshippers of God, because they hated God's holy religion, and the worship of him. This was that which made God's people so zealous against them, that they fought against God, *They are confederates against thee*, ver. 5. Were our interest only concerned, we could the better bear it, but when God himself is struck at, it is time to cry, help, Lord; *Keep not thou silence, O God.* He proves that they are confederate against God, for they are so against the people of God, who are near and dear to him, his son, his first-born, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance; he may truly be said to fight against me, that endeavours to destroy my children, to root out my family, and ruin my estate; Lord, saith the psalmist, they are thy enemies, for they consult against thy hidden ones. Note, God's people are his hidden ones; hid, (1.) In respect of secrecy; their life is *hid with Christ in God*; the world knows them not; if they knew them, they would not hate them as they do. (2.) In respect of safety; God takes them under his special protection, hides them in the hollow of his hand; and yet, in defiance of God and his power, and promise to secure his people, they will consult to ruin them, and *cast them down from their excellency*, Psal. lxii. 4. and to make a prey of those whom *the Lord hath set apart for himself*, Psal. iv. 3. They resolve to destroy those whom God resolves to preserve.

2. How this confederacy is managed; the devil is at the bottom of it, and therefore it is carried on, (1.) With a great deal of heat and violence; *thine enemies make a tumult*, ver. 2. *The heathen rage*, Psal. ii. 1. *The nations are angry*, Rev. xi. 18. They are noisy in their clamours against the people whom they hope to run down with their loud calumnies; this comes in as a reason why God should not keep silence: The enemies talk big, and talk much, Lord, let them not talk all, but do thou *speak to them in thy wrath*, Psal. ii. 5. (2.) With a great deal of pride and insolence; they have lifted up the head; in confidence of their success, they are so elevated, as if they could over-top the most High, and over-power the Almighty. (3.) With a great deal of art and policy; they have *taken crafty counsel*, ver. 3. The subtlety of the old serpent appears in their management, and they contrive by all possible means, tho' never so base, never so bad, to gain their point. They are *profound to make slaughter*, Hos. v. 2. as if they could out-wit infinite wisdom. (4.) With a great deal of unanimity; whatever separate clashing interest they have among themselves, against the people of God, they *consult with one consent*, ver. 5. nor is *Satan's kingdom divided against itself*. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too; *Fas est & ab hoste doceri*. Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous to serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends, that they may join in crucifying Christ, sure Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.

3. What is it that is aimed at in this confederacy; they consult not like the Gibeonites to make a league with Israel, that they might strengthen themselves by such a desirable alliance, which had been their wisdom: they consult not only to clip the wings of Israel, to recover their new conquests, and check the progress of their victorious arms; not only to keep the balance even between them and Israel, and to prevent their power from growing exorbitant: This will not serve; it is no less than the utter ruin and extirpation of Israel that is designed, ver. 4. *Come, let us cut them off from being a nation*, as they cut off the seven nations of Canaan; let us leave them neither root nor branch, but lay their country so perfectly waste, *that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance*, no not in history; for with

No. xlv.

them they would destroy their bibles, and burn all their records. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman: It is the secret wish of wicked men, that the church of God might not have a being in the world, that there might be no such thing as religion among mankind; having banished the sense of it out of their own hearts, they would gladly see the whole earth as well rid of it; all its laws and ordinances abolished, all its restraints and obligations shaken off; and all that preach, profess, or practise it, cut off; this they would bring it to if it were in their power; but *he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them*.

4. Who they are that are drawn into this confederacy; the nations that entered into this alliance are here mentioned, ver. 6, 7, 8. the Edomites and Ishmaelites, both descendents from Abraham, lead the van, for the apostates from the church have been its most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness Julian. These were allied to Israel in blood, and yet in alliance against Israel. There are no bonds of nature so strong, but the spirit of persecution has broke thro' them: *The brother shall betray the brother to death*. Moab and Ammon were the children of righteous Lot; but as an incestuous, so a degenerate race. The Philistines were long a thorn in Israel's side, and very vexatious; but how the inhabitants of Tyre, who in David's time were Israel's firm allies, come in among their enemies, I know not, but that Assur, *i. e.* the Assyrian, also is joined with them, is not strange, or that (as the word is) they were an arm to the children of Lot. See how numerous the enemies of God's church have always been; *Lord, how are they increased that trouble it!* God's heritage was as a speckled bird, *all the birds round about were against her*, Jer. xii. 9. which highly magnifies the power of God in preserving to himself a church in the world in despite of the combined force of earth and hell.

9. Do unto them as unto the Midianites: as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: 10. Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. 11. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: 12. Who said, Let us take to our selves the houses of God in possession. 13. O my God, make them like a wheel: as the stubble before the wind. 14. As the fire burneth the wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; 15. So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. 16. Fill their faces with shame: that they may seek thy name, O LORD. 17. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever: yea, let them be put to shame and perish: 18. That men may know, that thou whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

The psalmist here in the name of the church, prays for the destruction of those confederate forces, and in God's name foretels it; for this prayer that it might be so, amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so; and this prophecy reacheth to all the enemies of the gospel-church; whoever they be that oppose the kingdom of Christ, here they may read their doom.

The prayer is in short, that these enemies that were confederate against Israel, might be defeated in all their attempts, and that they might prove their own ruin, and so God's Israel might be preserved and perpetuated. Now this is here illustrated;

1. By some precedents; let that be their punishment which has been the fate of others who have formerly set themselves against God's Israel. The defeat and discomfiture of former combinations may be pleaded in prayer to God, and improved for the encouragement of our own faith and hope; because God is the same still that ever he was, the same to his people, and the same against his and their enemies; with him is no variableness.

(1.) He prays, that their armies might be destroyed as the armies of former enemies had been, ver. 9, 10. *Do to them as to the Midianites*; let them be routed by their own fears; for so the Midianites were more than by Gideon's three hundred men. Do to them as to the army under the command of Sisera, who was general under Jabin, king of Canaan, which God discomfited, Judg. iv. 15. at the brook Kishon, near to which was Endor, they became as dung on the earth, their dead bodies were thrown like dung laid in heaps, or spread to fatten the ground; they were trodden to dirt by Barak's small, but victorious, army; and this was fitly made a precedent here, because Deborah made it so to after-times when it was fresh, Judg. v. 31. *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord*, that is, so they shall perish.

(2.) He prays, that their leaders might be destroyed as they had been formerly; the common people would not have been so mischievous if their princes had not set them on, and there-

fore they are particularly prayed against, *ver. 11, 12.* Observe (1.) What their malice was against the Israel of God, they said, *Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession,* *ver. 12.* The pleasant places of God, so the word is, by which we may understand the land of Canaan, which was a pleasant land, and was Immanuel's land; or, the temple, which was indeed God's pleasant place, *Isa. lxiv. 11.* Or, (as Dr Hammond suggests) the pleasant pastures, which these Arabians, who traded in cattle, did in a particular manner court. The princes and nobles aimed to enrich themselves by this war; and their armies must be made as dung for the earth to serve their covetousness and their ambition. (2.) What their lot should be; they shall be made like Oreb and Zeeb, two princes of the Midianites, who when their forces were routed, were taken in their flight by the Ephraimites, and slain, *Judg. vii. 25.* and like Zeba and Zalmunna, whom Gideon himself slew, *Judg. viii. 21.* Let these enemies of ours be made as easy a prey to us, as they were to the conquerors then. We may not prescribe to God, but we may pray to God, that he will deal with the enemies of his church in our days, as he did with those in the days of our fathers.

2. He illustrates it by some similitudes, and prays,

(1.) That God would make them like a wheel, *ver. 13.* then that might be in continual motion, unquiet, unsettled, and giddy in all their counsels and resolves; that they might roll down easily and speedily to their own ruin. Or, as some think, that they might be broken by the judgments of God, as the corn is broken, or beaten out by the wheel which was then used in threshing. Thus when a wise king scattered the wicked, he is said to bring the wheel over them, *Prov. xx. 26.* They that trust in God have their hearts fixed, they that fight against him are unfixed, like a wheel.

(2.) That they might be chafed as stubble, or chaff before the fierce wind. The wheel, tho' it continually turn round yet is fixed on its own axis; but let them have no more fixation than the light stubble has which the wind hurries away, and no-body desires to save it, but is willing it should go, *Psal. i. 4.* Thus shall the wicked be driven away in his wickedness, and chafed out of the world.

(3.) That they might be consumed as wood by the fire, or as briars and thorns, as fern or furs, upon the mountains by the flames, *ver. 12.* when the stubble is driven by the wind; yet it will rest at last under some hedge, in some ditch or other: But he prays, that they might not only be driven away as stubble, but burnt up as stubble. And this will be the end of wicked men, *Heb. vi. 8.* and particularly of all the enemies of God's church. The reddition of these comparisons, we have, *ver. 15.* So persecute them with thy tempest, persecute them to their utter ruin, and make them afraid with thy storm. See how sinners are made miserable; the storm of God's wrath raiseth terrors in their own hearts, and so they are made compleatly miserable. God can deal with the proudest and most daring sinner that has bid defiance to his justice, and can make him afraid as a grasshopper. It is the torment of devils, that they tremble.

3. He illustrates it by the good consequences of their confusion, *ver. 16, 17, 18.* He prays here, that God having filled their hearts with terror, would thereby fill their faces with shame, that they might be ashamed of their enmity to the people of God, *Isa. xxvii. 11.* ashamed of their folly in acting both against Omnipotence itself, and their own true interest. They did what they could to put God's people to shame, but the shame will at long-run return upon themselves.

Now, 1. The beginning of this shame might be a means of their conversion; let them be broken and baffled in their attempts, that they may seek thy name, O Lord. Let them be put to a stand, that they may have both leisure and reason to pause a little, and consider who it is that they are fighting against, and what an unequal match they are for him, and may therefore humble and submit themselves, and desire conditions of peace. Let them be made to fear thy name, and perhaps that will bring them to seek thy name. Note, That which we should earnestly desire and beg of God for our enemies and persecutors, is, that God would bring them to repentance, and we should desire their abasement in order to this; no other confusion to them, but what may be a step towards towards their conversion.

2. If it did not prove a means of their conversion, the perfecting of it would redound greatly to the honour of God; if they will not be ashamed and repent, let them be put to shame and perish; if they will not be troubled and turned, which would soon put an end to all their trouble, a happy end, let them be troubled for ever, and never have peace: And this will be for God's glory, *ver. 18.* That other men may know and own, if they themselves will not, that thou whose name alone is JEHOVAH, (that incommunicable, tho' not ineffable name,) art the most High over all the earth. God's triumphs over his and his church's enemies, will be incontestible proofs, (1.) That he is according to his name Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient being, that has all power and per-

fection in himself. (2.) That he is the most high God, sovereign Lord of all, above all gods, above all kings, above all that exalt themselves, and pretend to be high. (3.) That he is so not only over the land of Israel, but over all the earth; even those nations of the earth that do not know him, or own him, for his kingdom ruleth over all. These are great and unquestionable truths, but men will hardly be persuaded to know and believe them; therefore the psalmist prays that the destruction of some might be the conviction of others. The final ruin of all God's enemies in the great day, will be the effectual proof of this before angels and men; when the everlasting shame and contempt to which sinners shall rise, Dan. xii. 2. shall redound to the everlasting honour and praise of that God to whom vengeance belongs.

P S A L M LXXXIV.

Tho' David's name be not in the title of this psalm, yet we have reason to think he was the penman of it, because it breathes so much of his excellent spirit, and is so like to the sixty-third psalm which was penned by him; it is supposed, that David penned this psalm when he was forced by Absalom's rebellion to quit his city, which he lamented his absence from, not so much because it was the royal city, as because it was the holy city, witness this psalm, which contains the pious breathings of a gracious soul after God, and communion with him. Tho' it be not entitled, yet it may fitly be looked upon as a psalm or song for the sabbath-day, the day of our solemn assemblies. The psalmist here with great devotion expresseth his affection, (1.) To the ordinances of God; his value for them, *ver. 1.* desire towards them, *ver. 2, 3.* His conviction of the happiness of those that did enjoy them, *ver. 4—7.* And his placing his own happiness so very much in the enjoyment of them, *ver. 10.* (2.) To the God of the ordinances; his desire towards him, *ver. 8, 9.* His faith in him, *ver. 11.* And his conviction of the happiness of those that put their confidence in him, *ver. 12.* In singing this psalm, we should have the same devout affections working towards God that David had, and then the singing of it will be very pleasant.

¶ To the chief musician upon Gittith, A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **H**OW amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. 3. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for her self, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. 5. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee: in whose heart are the ways of them. 6. Who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools. 7. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

The psalmist here being by force restrained from waiting upon God in publick ordinances, by the want of them is brought under a more sensible conviction than ever of the worth of them. Observe,

1. The wonderful beauty he saw in holy institutions, *ver. 1.* How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! Some think, he here calls God the Lord of hosts, i. e. in a special manner of the angels, the heavenly hosts, because of the presence of the angels in God's sanctuary; they attended the Shechinah, and were (as some think) signified by the cherubim; God is the Lord of these hosts, and his the tabernacle is: It is spoken of as more than one (thy tabernacles) because there were divers courts in which the people attended, and because the tabernacle itself consisted of a holy place, and a most holy. How amiable are these! How lovely is the sanctuary in the eyes of all that are truly sanctified! Gracious souls see a wonderful unexpressible beauty in holiness, and in holy work. A tabernacle was a mean habitation, but the disadvantage of external circumstances makes holy ordinances not at all the less amiable, for the beauty of holiness is spiritual, and their glory is within.

2. The

2. The longing desire he had to return to the enjoyment of public ordinances; or rather of God in them, *ver. 2.* It was an entire desire, body, soul, and spirit concurred in it; he was not conscious to himself of any rising thought to the contrary; it was an intense desire; it was like the desire of the ambitious or covetous, or epicure. He longed, he fainted, he cried out, importunate to be restored to his place in God's courts, and almost impatient of delay. Yet it was not so much the courts of the Lord that he coveted, but he cried out in prayer for the living God himself. O that I might know him, and be again taken into communion with him! *1 Job. i. 3.* Ordinances are empty things, if we meet not with God in the ordinances.

3. His grudging the happiness of the little birds that made their nests in the buildings that were adjoining to God's altars. *ver. 3.* This is an elegant and surprising expression of his affection to God's altars. *The sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself:* These little birds, by the instinct and direction of nature, provide habitations for themselves in houses, as other birds do in the woods, both for their own repose, and in which to lay their young; some such David supposeth there were in the buildings about the courts of God's house, and wisheth himself with them. He would rather live in a bird's nest nigh God's altars, than in a palace at a distance from them. He sometimes wished for the wings of a dove, on which to fly into the wilderness, *Psal. lv. 6.* Here for the wings of a sparrow, that he might fly undiscovered into God's courts; and tho' to watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-top, is the description of a very melancholy state and spirit, *Psal. cii. 7.* yet David would be glad to take it for his lot, provided he might be near God's altars: It is better to be serving God in solitude, than serving sin with a multitude. The word for a sparrow signifies any little bird, and (if I may offer a conjecture) perhaps, when in David's time musick was introduced so much into the sacred service, both vocal and instrumental, to compleat the harmony, they had singing-birds in cages hung about the courts of the tabernacle (for we find the singing of birds, taken notice of to the glory of God, *Psal. civ. 12.*) and David envies the happiness of these, and would gladly change places with them. Observe, David envies the happiness not of those birds that flew over the altars, and had only a transient view of God's courts, but of those that had nests for themselves there; David will not think it enough to sojourn in God's house as a way-faring man that turns aside to tarry for a night, but let this be his rest, his home, here he will dwell: And he takes notice that these birds not only have nests for themselves there, but there they lay their young; for those that have a place in God's courts themselves, cannot but desire that their children also may have in God's house, and within his walls, a place and a name, that they may feed their kids beside the shepherds tents. Some give another sense of this verse: Lord, by thy providence thou hast furnished the birds with nests and resting-places, agreeable to their nature, and to them they have free recourse; but thine altar, which is my nest, my resting-place, which I am desirous of as ever the wandering bird was of her nest, I cannot have access to. Lord, wilt thou provide better for thy birds than for thy babes? *As a bird that wanders from her nest,* so am I, now I wander from the place of God's altars, for that is my place, *Prov. xxvii. 8.* I shall never be easy till I return to my place again. Note, They whose souls are at home, at rest in God, cannot but desire a settlement near his ordinances. There were two altars, one for sacrifice, the other for incense, and David in his desire of a place in God's courts has an eye to both, as we also must in all our attendance on God have an eye both to the satisfaction, and to the intercession of Christ. And lastly, Observe how he eyes God in this address, thou art the Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Where should a poor distressed subject seek for protection but with his king? *And should not a people seek unto their God?* my King, my God is Lord of hosts, by him and his altars let me live and die.

4. His acknowledgment of the happiness both of the ministers and of the people that had liberty of attendance on God's altars: *Blessed are they,* O when shall I return to the enjoyment of that blessedness?

1. Blessed are the ministers; the priests and Levites that have their residence about the tabernacle, and are in their courses employed in the service of it. *Ver. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,* that are at home there, and whose business lies there: He is so far from pitying them as confined to a constant attendance, and obliged to perpetual seriousness, that he would sooner envy them than the greatest princes in the world: There are those that bless the covetous, but he blesteth the religious: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,* not because they have good wages, a part of every sacrifice for themselves, which would enable them to keep a good table, but because they have good work, they will be still praising thee; and if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in praising God, in continual praising him. Apply this to his house above, blessed are they that dwell there, angels and glorified saints, for they rest not day or night from praising God. Let us therefore spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work, in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity.

2. Blessed are the people, the inhabitants of the country who tho' they do not constantly dwell in God's house as the priests do, yet have liberty of access to it, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, the three great feasts, at which all the males were obliged to give their attendance, *Deut. xvi. 16.* David was so far from reckoning this an imposition, and a hardship put upon them, that he envies the happiness of those that might thus attend, *ver. 5, 6, 7.*

Those whom he pronounceth blessed are here described,

1. They are such as act in religion from a rooted principle of dependence upon God, and devotedness to him. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee,* i. e. that makes thee his strength, and strongly stays himself upon thee; that makes thy name his strong tower into which he runs for safety, *Prov. xviii. 10.* *Happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God,* *Psal. xl. 4.* —*cxlvi. 5.* Those are truly happy who go forth, and go on in the exercises of religion, not in their own strength, for then the work is sure to miscarry, but in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. David wished to return to God's tabernacles again, that there he might strengthen himself in the Lord his God for service and suffering.

2. They are such as have a dear love for holy ordinances, *in whose heart are the ways of them,* i. e. That having placed their happiness in God as their end, rejoice in all the ways that lead to him, all those means by which their graces are strengthened, and their communion with him kept up. They not only walk in these ways, but they have them in their hearts, they lay them near their hearts, there is no care or concern, no pleasure or delight, lies nearer than this. Note, Those that have the new Jerusalem in their eye, must have the ways that lead to it in their heart, must mind them, their eyes must look straight forward in them, must ponder the paths of them, must keep close to them, and be afraid of turning aside to the right hand or to the left. If we make God's promise our strength, must make God's word our rule, and walk by it.

3. They are such as will break through difficulties and discouragements in waiting upon God in holy ordinances, *ver. 6.* When they come up out of the country to worship at the feasts, their way lies through many a dry and sandy valley, (so some) in which they are ready to perish for thirst; but to guard against that inconvenience, they dig little pits to receive and keep the rain water, which is ready to them and others for their refreshment. When they make the pools, the rain of heaven fills them; if we be ready to receive the grace of God, that grace shall not be wanting to us, but shall be sufficient for us at all times; their way lay through many a weeping valley, so Baca signifies, that is, as others understand it many a watery valley, which in wet weather, when the rain filled the pools, either through the rising of the waters, or the dirtiness of the way, were unpassable; but by draining and trenching them, they made a road through them, for the benefit of those that went up to Jerusalem. Care should be taken to keep those roads in repair that lead to church, as well as those that lead to market. But all this is intended to shew, (1.) That they had a good will to the journey. When they were to attend the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, they would not be kept back by bad weather, or bad ways, nor make those an excuse for staying at home. Difficulties in the way of duty are designed to try our resolution, and *he that observes the wind shall not sow.* (2.) That they made the best of the way to Sion, contrived and took pains to mend it where it was bad, and what inconveniencies could not be removed, they bore them as well as they could. Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Baca, but even that may be made a well if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city.

4. They are such as are still pressing forward till they come to their journey's end at length, and do not take up short of it, *ver. 7. They go from strength to strength,* i. e. their company increaseth by the accession of more out of every town they pass through, till they become very numerous; those that were near staid till those that were farther off called on them, saying, *Come, and let us go to the house of the Lord,* *Psal. cxxii. 1, 2.* That they might go together in a body, in token of their mutual love. Or, the particular persons, instead of being fatigued with the tediousness of their journey, and the difficulties they met with, the nearer they came to Jerusalem, the more lively and chearful they were, and so went *stronger and stronger,* *Job xvii. 8.* Thus it is promised that they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, *Isa. xl. 31.* Even where they are weak, there they were strong. They go from virtue to virtue, (so some) it is the same word that is used for the virtuous woman, they that press forward in their christian course, shall find God adding grace to their graces, *Job. i. 16.* They shall be changed from glory to glory, *2 Cor. iii. 18.* from one degree of glorious grace to another; till at length every one of them appears before God in Sion, to give glory to him, and receive blessings from him. Note, They that grow in grace, shall at last be perfect

in glory. The Chaldee reads it, *They go from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine; and the pains which they have taken about the law shall appear before God, whose majesty dwells in Sion.* We must go from one duty to another, from prayer to the word, from practising what we have learned to learn more; which if we do, the benefit of it will appear to God's glory, and our own everlasting comfort.

8. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. 9. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. 10. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. 11. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 12. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Here, 1. The psalmist prays for audience and acceptance with God, not mentioning particularly what he desired God would do for him; he needed to say no more, when he had professed such an affectionate esteem for the ordinances of God, which now he was restrained and banished from, all his desire was in that profession plainly before God, and his longing, his groaning was not hid from him; therefore he prays, *ver. 8, 9.* only that God would hear his prayer, and give ear, that he would behold his condition, behold his good affection, and look upon his face, which way it was set, and how his countenance discovered the longing desire he had towards God's courts; he calls himself (as many think) God's anointed, for so David was anointed by him, and anointed for him. In this petition, (1.) He has an eye to God, under several of his glorious titles. As the Lord God of hosts, that has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth; as the God of Jacob, a God in covenant with his own people, a God that never said to the praying seed of Jacob, *seek ye me in vain.* And as God our shield, that takes his people under his special protection, pursuant to his covenant with Abraham their father, *Gen. xv. 1. Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield.* When David could not be hid in the secret of God's tabernacle, *Psal. xxvii. 5.* being at a distance from it, yet he hoped to find God his shield ready to him wherever he was. (2.) He has an eye to the Mediator, for of him I rather understand those words, *look upon the face of thy Messiah,* thine anointed one; for of his anointing David spoke, *Psal. xlv. 7.* In all our addresses to God we must desire that he would look upon the face of Christ, accept us for his sake, and be well-pleased with us in him, we must look with an eye of faith, and then God will with an eye of favour look upon the face of the anointed, who does shew his face, when we without him dare not shew ours.

2. He pleads his love to God's ordinances, and his dependence upon God himself.

1. God's courts were his choice, *ver. 10.* A very dear love he had for holy ordinances, he valued them above any thing else, and he expresseth his value for them, (1.) By preferring the time of God's worship before all other time. A day spent in thy courts, in attending on the services of religion, wholly abstracted from all secular affairs, is better than a thousand, not than a thousand in thy courts, but any where else in this world, tho' in the midst of all the delights of the children of men. Better than a thousand, he doth not say days, you may supply it with years, with ages, if you will, and yet David will set his hand to it. A day in thy courts, a sabbath-day, a holy-day, a feast-day, tho' but one day, would be very welcome to me; nay, (as some of the rabbins paraphrase it) tho' I were to die for it the next day, yet that would be more sweet than years spent in the business and pleasure of this world. One of these days shall with its pleasure chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, to shame, as not worthy to be compared. (2.) By preferring the place of worship before any other place; *I had rather be a door-keeper,* rather be in the meanest place and office in the house of my God, than dwell in state, as master, in the tents of wickedness. Observe, He calls even the tabernacle a house, for the presence of God in it made even those curtains more stately than a palace, and more strong than a castle. It is the house of my God; the covenant interest he had in God as his God, was the sweet string on which he loved dearly to be harping; they, and they only, that can upon good ground call God theirs, delight in the courts of his house. I would rather be a porter in God's house, than a prince in those tents where wickedness reigns; rather lie at the threshold, so the word is; that was the beggar's place, *Acts iii. 2.* No matter (saith David) let that be my place rather than none: The Pharisees loved synagogues well enough, provided they might have the uppermost seats there, *Matt. xxiii. 6.* That they might make a figure; holy David is not

solicitous about that, if he may but be admitted to the threshold, he will say, *Master, it is good to be here.* Some read it, *I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of wickedness,* alluding to the law concerning servants, who if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, *Exod. xxi. 5, 6.* David loved his master, and loved his work so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.

2. God himself was his hope, and joy, and all. Therefore he loved the house of his God, because his expectation was from his God, and there he used to communicate himself, *ver. 11.* See, (1.) What God is and will be to his people. *The Lord God is a sun and shield;* we are here in darkness, but if God be our God, he will be to us a sun to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us; we are here in danger, but he will be to us a shield, to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thick about us, *with his favour he will compass us as with a shield.* Let us therefore always walk in the light of the Lord, and never throw ourselves out of his protection, and we shall find him a sun to supply us with all good, and a shield to shelter us from all evil. (2.) What he doth and will bestow upon them. *The Lord will give grace and glory.* Grace signifies both the good-will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us; glory signifies both the honour which he now puts upon us, in giving us the adoption of sons, and that which he has prepared us in the inheritance of sons. God will give them grace in this world as a preparation for glory, and glory in the other world as the perfection of grace; both are God's gift, his free gift. And as on the one hand, wherever God gives grace he will give glory, for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it, so on the other hand he will give glory hereafter to none to whom he doth not give grace now, or that receive his grace in vain. And if God will give grace and glory, which are the two great things that concur to make us happy in both worlds, we may be sure that *no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly.* It is the character of all good people, that they walk uprightly, that they worship God in spirit and in truth, and have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity; and such may be sure that God will withhold *no good thing from them,* that is requisite to their comfortable passage through this world; make sure grace and glory, and *other things shall be added;* this is a comprehensive promise, and is such an assurance of the present comfort of the saints, that whatever they desire, and think they need, they may be sure that either infinite wisdom sees it is not good for them, or infinite goodness will give it them in due time. Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us every thing that is good for us.

Lastly, He pronounceth them blessed that put their confidence in God, as he did, *ver. 12.* They are blessed that have the liberty of ordinances, and the privileges of God's house: But tho' we should be debarred from them, yet we are not therefore debarred from blessedness if we trust in God. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house, and in him we shall be happy, and may be easy.

P S A L M LXXXV.

Interpreters are generally of opinion that this psalm was penned after the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when they still remained under some tokens of God's displeasure, which they here pray for the removal of. And nothing appears to the contrary, but that it might be penned then, as well as Psal. cxxxvii. They are the publick interests that lie near the psalmist's heart here, and the psalm is penned for the great congregation. The church was here in a deluge, above were clouds, below were waves, every thing was dark and dismal; the church is like Noah in the ark, between life and death, between hope and fear; Being so, (1.) Here is the dove sent forth in prayer. The petitions are, against sin and wrath, ver. 4. and for mercy and grace, ver. 7. The pleas are taken from former favours, ver. 1, 2, 3. and present distresses, ver. 5, 6. (2.) Here is the dove returning with an olive-branch of peace and good tidings; the psalmist expects her return, ver. 8. and then recounts the favours to God's Israel, which by the spirit of prophecy he gave assurance of to others, and by the spirit of faith he took the assurance of to himself, ver. 9—13. In singing this psalm, we may be assisted in our prayers to God both for his church in general, and for the land of our nativity in particular. The former part will be of use to direct our desires; the latter to encourage our faith and hope in those prayers.

To the chief musician, A psalm for the sons of Korah.

LORD thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. 3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned *thy self* from the fierceness of thine anger. 4. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. 5. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? 6. Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? 7. Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

The church in affliction and distress, is here, by direction from God, making her application to God; so ready is God to hear and answer the prayers of his people, that by his Spirit in the word, in the heart, he indites their petitions, and puts words into their mouths. The people of God in a very low and weak condition, are here taught how to address themselves to God.

1. They are to acknowledge with thankfulness the great things God had done for them, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* Thou hast done so and so for us and our fathers. Note, The sense of present afflictions, should not drown the remembrance of former mercies; but even then when we are brought very low, we must call to remembrance past experiences of God's goodness, which we must take notice of with thankfulness to his praise. They speak of it here with pleasure, (1.) That God had shewed himself propitious to their land, and had smiled upon it as his own; *Thou hast been favourable to thy land*, as thine, with distinguishing favours. Note, The favour of God is the spring-head of all good, and the fountain of happiness to nations, as well as to particular persons. It was by the favour of God that Israel got and kept possession of Canaan, *Psal. xlv. 3.* And if he had not continued very favourable to them, they had been ruined many a time. (2.) That he had rescued them out of the hands of their enemies, and restored them to their liberty; *Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob*, and settled those in their own land again, that had been driven out, and were strangers in a strange land, prisoners in the land of their oppressors. The captivity of Jacob, tho' it may continue long, will be brought back in due time. (3.) That he had not dealt with them according to the desert of their provocations, *ver. 2.* *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people*, and not punished them as in justice thou mightest. *Thou hast covered all their sin*: When God forgives sin, he covers it, and when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. The bringing back of their captivity was then an instance of God's favour to them, when it was accompanied with the pardon of their iniquity. (4.) That he had not continued his anger against them so far, and so long as they had reason to fear, *ver. 3.* *having covered all their sin*, thou hast taken away all thy wrath; for when sin is set aside, God's anger ceaseth; God is pacified, if we are purified. See what the pardon of sin is, *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people*, that is, *Thou hast turned thine anger from waxing hot*, so as to consume us in the flame of it. In compassion to us thou hast not stirred up all thy wrath, but when an intercessor hath stood before thee in the gap, thou hast turned away thine anger.

2. They are taught to pray to God for grace and mercy, in reference to their present distress; this is inferred from the former: Thou hast done well for our fathers, do well for us, for we are the children of the same covenant. (1.) They pray for converting grace, *Turn us, O God of our salvation*; in order to the turning of our captivity; turn us from iniquity; turn us to thy self, and to our duty; turn us, and we shall be turned. All those whom God will save, sooner or later he will turn. If no conversion, no salvation. (2.) They pray for the removal of the tokens of God's displeasure which they were under; *cause thine anger towards us to cease*, as thou didst many a time cause it to cease in the days of our fathers, when thou didst take away thy wrath from them. Observe the method, First turn us to thee, and then cause thine anger to turn from us. When we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being reconciled to us. (3.) They pray for the manifestation of God's good-will to them, *ver. 7.* *Shew us thy mercy, O Lord*; i. e. shew thy self merciful to us: Not only have mercy on us, but let us have the comfortable evidences of that mercy; let us know that thou hast mercy on us, and mercy in store for us. (4.) They pray, that God would, graciously to them, and gloriously to himself, appear on their behalf; *Grant us thy salvation*: grant it by thy promise, and then, no doubt, thou wilt work it by thy providence. Note, The vessels of God's mercy, are the heirs of his salvation; he shews mercy to those, to whom he grants salvation; for salvation is of meer mercy.

No. xlv.

3. They are taught humbly to expostulate with God concerning their present troubles, *ver. 5, 6.* Where observe, 1. What they dread and deprecate; *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?* We are undone if thou art, but we hope thou wilt not. *Wilt thou draw out thine anger unto all generations?* No; thou art gracious, slow to anger, and swift to shew mercy, and will not contend for ever. Thou wast not angry with our fathers for ever, but didst soon turn thy self from the fierceness of thy wrath; why then wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Are not thy mercies and compassions as plentiful and powerful as ever they were? Impenitent sinners God will be angry with for ever; for, what is hell but the wrath of God drawn out unto endless generations? But shall a hell upon earth be the lot of thy people? 2. What they desire and hope for; *Wilt thou not revive us again?* *ver. 6.* revive us with comforts spoken to us, revive us with deliverances wrought for us? Thou hast been favourable to thy land formerly, and that revived it; wilt thou not again be favourable, and so revive it again? God had granted to the children of the captivity *some reviving in their bondage*, *Ezra ix. 8.* Their return out of Babylon was as *life from the dead*, *Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12.* Now, Lord, (say they) *Wilt thou not revive us again, and put thy hand again the second time to gather us in?* *Isa. xi. 11.* *Psal. cxxvi. 1, 4.* *Revive thy work in the midst of the years*, *Hab. iii. 2.* Revive us again, (1.) That thy people may rejoice; and so we shall have the comfort of it, *Psal. xiv. 7.* Give them life, that they may have joy. (2.) That they may rejoice in thee, and so thou wilt have the glory of it. If God be the fountain of all our mercies, he must be the centre of all our joys.

8. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. 9. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. 10. Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 11. Truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from heaven. 12. Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is good*: and our land shall yield her increase. 13. Righteousness shall go before him: and shall set us in the way of his steps.

We have here an answer to the prayers and expostulations in the foregoing verses.

1. In general, it is an answer of peace; this the psalmist is soon aware of, *ver. 8.* for he stands upon his watch-tower to hear what God will say unto him, as the prophet, *Hab. ii. 1, 2.* *I will hear what God the Lord will speak.* This intimates, (1.) The stilling of his passion, his grief, his fear, and the tumult of his spirit which these occasioned; compose thy self, O my soul, in an humble silence to attend upon God, and wait his motions. I have spoken enough, or too much; now I will hear what God will speak, and welcome his holy will; *What saith my lord unto his servant?* If we would have God to hear what we say to him by prayer, we must be ready to hear what he saith to us by his word. (2.) *The raising of his expectation*; Now he has been at prayer, he looks for something very great and very kind from the God that hears prayer. When we have prayed, we should look after our prayers, and stay for an answer. Now, observe here, (1.) What it is that he promiseth himself from God in answer to his prayers. *He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints.* There is a people in the world that are God's people, set apart for him, subject to him, and that shall be saved by him: All his people are his saints, sanctified by his grace, and devoted to his glory; these may sometimes want peace, when without are fightings, and within are fears; but sooner or later God will speak peace to them; if he do not command outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace; speaking that to their hearts by his Spirit, which he has spoken to their ears by his word and ministers, and making them to hear joy and gladness. (2.) What use he makes of this expectation. (1.) He takes the comfort of it; and so must we: *I will hear what God the Lord will speak*, hear the assurances he gives of peace, in answer to prayer. When God speaks peace, we must not be deaf to it, but with all humility and thankfulness receive it. (2.) He cautions the saints to do the duty which this calls for; *but let them not turn again to folly*; for it is on these terms, and no other, that peace is to be expected. To those, and those only, peace is spoken, who turn from sin; but if they return to it again; it is at their peril. All sin is folly; but especially backsliding; it is egregious folly to turn to sin after we have seemed to turn from it, to turn to it after God hath spoken peace, God is for peace, but when he speaks, such are for war.

2. Here are the particulars of this answer of peace; he doubts not but all will be well in a little time, and therefore gives us the pleasing prospect of the flourishing estate of the church in the five last verses of the psalm, which describe the peace and prosperity that God at length blessed the children of the captivity with; when after a great deal of toil and toils; at length they gained a settlement

settlement in their own land. But it may be taken (1.) As a promise also to all that fear God, and work righteousness, that they shall be easy, they shall be happy. (2.) As a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the blessings with which that kingdom should be enriched. Here is,

1. Help at hand, *ver. 9. Surely his salvation is nigh, nigh to us*, nigher than we think it is, it will soon be effected, how great soever our difficulties and distresses are, when God's time is come, and that time is not far off; when the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses comes. It is nigh to all that fear him, when trouble is nigh, salvation is nigh; for God is a very present help in time of trouble to all that are his; whereas *salvation is far from the wicked*, Psal. cxix. 155. This may fitly be applied to Christ, the author of eternal salvation: it was the comfort of the Old Testament saints, that though they lived not to see that redemption in Jerusalem, which they waited for, yet they were sure it was nigh, and would be welcome to all that fear God.

2. Honour secured; that *glory may dwell in our land*, i. e. that we may have the worship of God settled and established among us; for that is the glory of a land. When that goes, Ichabod, the glory, is departed; when that stays, glory dwells. This may refer to the Messiah, who was to be the glory of his people Israel, and who came and dwelt among them, *John i. 4.* for which reason their land is called *Immanuel's land*, *Isa. viii. 8.*

3. Graces meeting, and happily embracing, *ver. 10, 11. Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, kiss each other.* This may be understood (1.) Of the reformation of the people and of the government, in the administration of which, all those graces should be conspicuous and commanding. The rulers and ruled shall all be merciful and true, righteous and peaceable; when there is no truth nor mercy, all goes to ruin, *Hof. iv. 1. Isa. lix. 14, 15.* But when these meet in the management of all affairs, when these give aim, when these give law, when there is such plenty of truth that it sprouts up like the grass of the earth, and of righteousness, that it is showered down like rain from heaven, then things go well. When in every congress, mercy and truth meet, in every embrace righteousness and peace kiss, and common honesty is indeed common, then glory dwells in a land, as the sin of reigning dishonesty, is a reproach to any people. (2.) Of the return of God's favour, and the continuance of it thereupon. When a people return to God, and adhere to him in a way of duty, he will return to them and abide with them in a way of mercy. So some understand this, man's truth, and God's mercy, man's righteousness and God's peace, meet together. If God finds us true to him, to one another, to ourselves, we shall find him merciful; if we make conscience of righteousness, we shall have the comfort of peace. If *truth spring out of the earth*, i. e. (as Dr Hammond expounds it) out of the hearts of men, the proper soil for it to grow in, righteousness, i. e. God's mercy, shall look down from heaven, as the sun doth upon the world, when it sheds its influences on the productions of the earth, and cherisheth them. (3.) Of the harmony of the divine attributes in the Messiah's undertaking. In him who is both our salvation and our glory, *Mercy and truth are met together*, God's mercy and truth, and his *righteousness and peace have kissed each other*; i. e. the great affair of our salvation is so well contrived, so well concerted, that God may have mercy upon poor sinners, and be at peace with them without any wrong to his truth and righteousness. He is true to the threatening, and just in his government, and yet pardons sinners, and takes them into covenant with himself. Christ, as mediator, brings heaven and earth together again, which sin had set at variance; through him *truth springs out of the earth*, that truth which God desires in the inward part, and then *righteousness looks down from heaven*, for God is just, and the justifier of them which believe in Jesus; or it may note, that in the kingdom of the Messiah these graces shall flourish and prevail, and have an universal command.

4. Great plenty of every thing desirable, *ver. 12. The Lord shall give that which is good*, i. e. every thing that he sees to be good for us; all good comes from God's goodness; and when mercy, truth, and righteousness, have a sovereign influence on mens hearts and lives, all good may be expected; if we thus seek the righteousness of God's kingdom, other things shall be added; *Mat. vii. 33.* When the glory of the gospel dwells in our land, then it shall yield its increase, for soul prosperity will either bring outward prosperity along with it, or sweeten the want of it. See *Psal. lxxvii. 6.*

5. A sure conduct in the good way, *ver. 13. The righteousness of his promise which he hath made to us*, assuring us of happiness, the righteousness of sanctification, that good work which he has wrought in us, these shall go before him, to prepare his way, both to raise our expectations of his favour, and to qualify us for it; and this shall go before us also, and be our guide to set us in the way of his steps, i. e. to encourage our hopes, and guide our practice, that we may go forth to meet him when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy. Christ the sun of righteousness shall bring us to God, and puts us into the way that leads

to him; John Baptist, a preacher of righteousness, shall go before Christ to prepare his way. Righteousness is a sure guide both in meeting God, and in following him.

P S A L M LXXXVI.

This psalm is intituled a prayer of David; probably it was not penned, upon any particular occasion, but was a prayer he often used himself, and recommended to others for their use, especially in a day of affliction. Many think that David penned this prayer as a type of Christ, who in the days of his flesh offered up strong cries, Heb. v. 7. David in this prayer (according to the nature of that duty) (1.) Gives glory to God, ver. 8, 9, 10, 12, 13. (2.) Seeks for grace and favour from God; that God would hear his prayers, ver. 1, 6, 7. Preserve and save him, and be merciful to him, ver. 2, 3, 16. that he would give him joy, and grace, and strength, and put honour upon him, ver. 4, 11, 17. He pleads God's goodness, ver. 5, 15. and the malice of his enemies, ver. 14. In singing this we must, as David did, lift up our souls to God with application.

¶ A prayer of David.

1. **B**OW down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. 2. Preserve my soul, for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. 3. Be merciful unto me, O LORD: For I cry unto thee daily. 4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. 5. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive: and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. 6. Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer: and attend to the voice of my supplications. 7. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

This psalm was published under the title of a prayer of David; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expressions of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison with some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer.

Now here we may observe,

1. The petitions he puts up to God. It is true, prayer accidentally may preach, but it is most fit that (as it is in this prayer) every passage should be directed to God, for such is the nature of prayer as it is here described, *ver. 4. Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*, as he had said, *Psal xxv. 1.* In all the parts of prayer, the soul must ascend upon the wings of faith and holy desire, and be lifted up to God, to meet the communications of his grace, and in an expectation raised very high, of great things from him.

(1.) He begs that God would give a gracious audience to his prayers, *ver. 1. Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me.* When God hears our prayers it is fitly said that he bows down ear to them, for it is admirable condescension in God, that he is pleased to take notice of such mean creatures as we are, and such defective prayers as ours are. He repeats this again, *ver. 6. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer*, a favourable ear, though it be whispered, tho' it be stammered, *attend to the voice of my supplications*: Not that God needs to have his affection stirred up by any thing that we can say; but thus we must express our desire of his favour. The Son of David spake it with assurance and pleasure, *John xi. 41, 42. Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me alway.*

(2.) He begs that God would take him under his special protection, and so be the author of his salvation, *ver. 2. Preserve my soul, save thy servant.* It was David's soul that was God's servant, for those only serve God acceptably that serve him with their spirits. David's concern is about his soul; if we understand it of his natural life, it teaches us, That the best self-preservation is to commit ourselves to God's keeping, and by faith and prayer to make our Creator our Preserver. But it may be understood of his spiritual life; the life of the soul as distinct from the body; preserve my soul, from that one evil and dangerous thing to souls, and that is sin. Preserve my soul, and so save me: all those whom God will save he doth preserve, and will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom.

3. He begs that God would look upon him with an eye of pity and compassion, *ver. 3. Be merciful to me, O Lord.* It is mercy

mercy in God to pardon our sins, and to help us out of our distresses; both these are included in this prayer, *God be merciful to me*. Men shew no mercy, we ourselves deserve no mercy, but, Lord, for mercy-sake, be *merciful unto me*.

(4.) He begs that God would fill him with inward comfort, *ver. 4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant*. It is God only that can put gladness into the heart, and make the soul to rejoice, and then, and not till then, the joy is full: and those that are God's servants, as it is their duty to *serve him with gladness*, so it is their privilege to be filled with joy and peace in believing; and they may in faith pray not only that God will preserve their souls, but that he will *rejoice their souls*, and the joy of the Lord will be their strength. Observe, When he prays, *rejoice my soul*, he adds, for *unto thee do I lift up my soul*. Then we may expect comfort from God when we take care to keep up our communion with God; prayer is the nurse of spiritual joy.

2. The pleas with which he enforceth these petitions.

1. He pleads his relation to God and interest in him. Thou art my God to whom I have devoted myself, and on whom I depend, and I am thy servant, (*ver. 2.*) in subjection to thee, and therefore looking for protection from thee.

2. He pleads distress; *Hear me for I am poor and needy*, therefore I want thy help, therefore none else will hear me; God is the poor man's king, whose glory it is to *save the souls of the needy*; they that are poor in spirit, that see themselves empty and necessitous, are most welcome to the God of all grace.

3. He pleads God's good will towards all that seek him, *ver. 5. To thee do I lift up my soul* in desire and expectation; for thou, Lord, art good, and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good house-keeper? The goodness of God's nature is a great encouragement to us in all other addresses to him. His goodness appears in two things, giving, and forgiving. (1.) He is a sin-pardoning God; not only he can forgive, but he is ready to forgive; more ready to forgive, than we are to repent. *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest*, Psal. xxxii. 5. (2.) He is a prayer-hearing God; he is plenteous in mercy, very full, and very free, both rich and liberal unto *all them that call upon him*; he has wherewithal to supply all their needs, and is open-handed in granting that supply.

4. He pleads God's good work in himself, by which he had qualified him for the tokens of his favour. Three things were wrought in him by divine grace, which he looked upon as earnest of all good.

1. A conformity to God, *ver. 2. I am holy*, therefore preserve my soul; for those whom the Spirit sanctifies, he will preserve. He doth not say this in pride and vain-glory, but with humble thankfulness to God; *I am one whom thou favourest*, so the margin reads it, whom thou hast set apart for thyself; if God has begun a good work of grace in us, we must own that *the time was a time of love; then was I in his eyes as one that found favour*; and whom God hath taken into his favour he will take under his protection. *All his saints are in thy hand*. Deut. xxxiii. 3. Observe, *I am needy*, *ver. 1. yet I am holy*, *ver. 2. Holy and yet needy; poor in the world, but rich in faith*. And those who preserve their purity in their greatest poverty, may assure themselves that God will preserve their comforts, will preserve their souls.

2. A confidence in God; *save thy servant that trusteth in thee*. They that are holy, yet must not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace. They that trust in God, may expect salvation from him.

3. A disposition to communion with God; he hopes God will answer his prayers, because he had inclined him to pray. (1.) To be constant in prayer; *I cry unto thee daily, and all the day*, *ver. 3.* It is thus our duty to pray always, without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer; and then we may hope to have our prayers heard which we make in time of trouble, if we have made conscience of the duty at other times, at all times. It is comfortable if an affliction finds the wheels of prayer a-going, and that they are not then to be set a-going. (2.) To be inward with God in prayer; to *lift up his soul* to him, *ver. 4.* Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies, when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him. (3.) To be in a special manner earnest with God in prayer when he was in affliction, *ver. 7. In the day of my trouble*, whatever others do, *I will call upon thee*, and commit my case to thee, for thou wilt hear and answer me, and I shall not seek in vain, as those did who cried, *O Baal hear us, but there was no voice, nor any that regarded*, 1 Kings xviii. 29.

8. Among the gods *there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works*. 9. All nations whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord: and shall glorify thy name. 10. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone. 11. Teach me thy way, O LORD, I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. 12. I will praise thee, O Lord my

God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13. For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. 14. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul: and have not set thee before them. 15. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious: long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me, give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid. 17. Shew me a token for good, that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

David is here going on in his prayer.

1. He gives glory to God; for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory, to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations.

(1.) As a being of unparalleled perfection, such an one as there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him; *ver. 8.* Among the gods, the false gods, whom the heathens worshipped, the angels, the kings of the earth, among them all, *there is none like unto thee, O Lord*; none so wise, so mighty, so good; *neither are there any works like unto thy works*, which is an undeniable proof that there is none like him; his own works praise him, and the best way we have of praising him, is by acknowledging, that there is none like him.

(2.) As the fountain of all being, and the centre of all praise, *ver. 9. Thou hast made all nations*, made them all of one blood, they all derive their being from thee, and have a constant dependence on thee, and therefore *they shall come and worship before thee, and glorify thy name*. This was in part fulfilled in the multitude of proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon, but was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when some out of every kingdom and nation should be effectually brought in to praise God. *Rev. vii. 9.* It was by Christ that God made all nations, for without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore through Christ, and by the power of his gospel and grace, all nations shall be brought to *worship before God*, Isa. lxvi. 23.

(3.) As a being infinitely great; *ver. 10.* Therefore all nations shall worship before thee, because as *King of nations* thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute, and incontestible, thy majesty terrible and insupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and for the proof of this, *thou doest wondrous things*, which all nations admire, and from whence they might easily infer that thou art God alone, not only none like thee, but none beside thee. Let us always entertain great thoughts of this great God, and be filled with holy admirings of this God that doth wonders; and let him alone have our hearts who is God alone.

(4.) As a being infinitely good. Man is bad, very wicked and vile, *ver. 14.* no mercy is to be expected from him, *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious*, *ver. 15.* This is that attribute by which he proclaims his name, and by which we are therefore to proclaim it, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* It is his goodness that is over all his works, and therefore should fill all our praises; and this is our comfort in reference to the wickedness of the world we live in, that however it be, God is good. Men are barbarous, but God is gracious; men are false, but God is faithful. God is not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him *mercy rejoiceth against judgment*. He is long-suffering towards us, tho' we forfeit his favour, and provoke him to anger, and he is *plenteous in mercy and truth*, as faithful in performing as he was free in promising.

(5.) As a kind friend and bountiful benefactor to him. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly, when we observe how good he has been to us. This therefore the psalmist harps upon with most pleasure, *ver. 12, 13.* He had said, *ver. 9. All nations shall praise thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name*. It is some satisfaction to a good man to think, that others shall praise and glorify God, but it is his greatest care and pleasure to do it himself. Whatever others do (saith David) *I will praise thee, O Lord my God*, not only as the Lord, but as my God. And I will do it with all mine heart, *i. e.* I will be ready to do it, and cordial in it; I will do it with cheerfulness and liveliness, with a sincere regard to thy honour; for *I will glorify thy name*, not for a time, but for evermore. I will do it as long as I live, and hope to be doing it to eternity. And with good reason does he resolve to be thus particular in praising God, because God had shewed him particular favours. *For great is thy mercy towards me*. The fountain of mercy is inexhaustibly full, the streams of mercy are inestimably rich; when we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us thus to magnify it, *Great is thy mercy towards me*. Of the greatness of God's mercy, he gives this instance, *Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell*; from death, from

so great a death, as St Paul, 2 Cor. i. 10. from eternal death, so even some of the Jewish writers understand it; David knew he deserved to have been cast off for ever into the lowest hell for his sin in the matter of Uriah; but Nathan assured him, the Lord had *taken away his sin*; and by that word he was delivered from the lowest hell, and herein God's mercy was great towards him. Even the best saints owe it not to their own merit, but to the mercy of God, that they are saved from the lowest hell: and the consideration of that should greatly enlarge their hearts in praising the mercy of God, which they are obliged to glorify for evermore. So glorious, so gracious a rescue from everlasting misery, justly requires the return of everlasting praise.

3. He prays earnestly for mercy and grace from God. He complains of the restless and implacable malice of his enemies against him, *ver. 14.* Lord, be thou for me; for there are many against me; then takes notice of their character, they are proud men that looked with disdain upon poor David: Many are made persecutors by their pride. They are violent men, that will carry all before them by force, right or wrong; they are terrible, formidable men; (so some) that do what they can to frighten all about them. Their number; there are assemblies of them, they were men in authority, and met in councils and courts; or men for conversation, and met in clubs. But being assembled they were the more capable of doing mischief. Their enmity to David; they rise up against me in open rebellion, they not only plot, but they put their plots in execution as far as they can; and the design is not only to depose David, but to destroy him; they seek after my life, to slay me; after my soul, to damn me; if it lay in their power. And, lastly, Here is their distance and estrangement from God, which was at the bottom of their enmity to David, they have not set thee before them; and what good can be expected from those that have no fear of God before their eyes? Lord, appear against them, for they are thine enemies as well as mine.

His petitions are,

1. For the operations of God's grace in him, *ver. 11.* He prays that God would give him, (1.) An understanding heart, that he would inform and instruct him concerning his duty; *Teach me thy way, O Lord,* the way that thou hast appointed me to walk in, when I am in doubt concerning it, make it plain to me what I should do, let me hear the voice, saying, *this is the way,* Isa. xxx. 21. David was a very knowing man in the things of God, and yet was sensible he needed further instruction, and many a time could not trust his own judgment. *Teach me thy way, I will walk in thy truth*; one would think it should be, *teach me thy truth, and I will walk in thy way*, but it comes all to one, it is the way of truth that God teacheth, and that we must choose, and walk in, *Psal. cxix. 30.* Christ is the way and the truth, and we must both learn Christ, and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth unless he teach us, and if we expect he should teach us, we must resolve to be governed by his teachings, *Isa. ii. 3.* (2.) An upright heart, *unite my heart to fear thy name*, i. e. make me sincere in religion; an hypocrite has a double heart, let mine be single, and entire for God; not divided between him and the world; not straggling from him; our hearts are apt to wander, and hang loose; their powers and faculties scatter after a thousand foreign things, we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them, that we may serve God with all that is within us, and all little enough to be employed in his service. Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him, that is an united heart.

2. For the tokens of God's favour to him, *ver. 16, 17.* Three things he here prays for, (1.) That God would speak peace and comfort to him. *O turn unto me*, as to one thou lovest, and hast a kind and tender concern for; my enemies turn against me, my friends turn from me, Lord, do thou turn to me, and have mercy upon me; it will be a comfort to me to know that thou pitiest me. (2.) That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety. Give me thy strength, i. e. put strength into me that I may help myself, and put forth thy strength for me, that I may be saved out of the hands of those that seek my ruin. He pleads relation, I am *thy servant*, I am so by birth, as the son of thine handmaid, born in thy house, and therefore thou art my rightful owner and proprietor, from whom I may expect protection. *I am thine, save me.* The children of godly parents, who were betimes dedicated to the Lord, may plead it with him; if they come under the discipline of his family, they are entitled to the privileges of it. (3.) That God would put reputation on him; *shew me a token for good*, i. e. make it to appear to others as well as to myself, that thou art doing me good and designing further good for me. Let me have some unquestionable illustrious instances of thy favour to me, *that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed of their enmity to me*, as they will have reason to be when they perceive, *thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me*, and that therefore they have been striving against God, opposing one whom he owns, and that they have been striving in vain to ruin and

vex one whom God himself has undertaken to help and comfort. The joy of the saints shall be the shame of their persecutors.

P S A L M LXXXVII.

The foregoing psalm was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard to be understood. It is an encomium of Zion, as a type and figure of the gospel church, to which what is here spoken is very applicable. Zion for the temple's sake is here preferred, (1.) Before the rest of the land of Canaan, as being crowned with special tokens of God's favour, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) Before any other place or country whatsoever, as being replenished with more eminent men, and with a greater plenty of divine blessings, ver. 4—7. Some think it was penned to express the joy of God's people when Zion was in a flourishing state, others think it was penned to encourage their faith and hope when Zion was in ruins, and was to be rebuilt after the captivity; tho' no man cared for her, Jer. xxx. 17. This is Zion whom no man seeketh after, yet God had done great things for her, and spoken glorious things of her; which should all have their perfection and accomplishment in the gospel-church; to that therefore we must have an eye in singing this psalm.

¶ A psalm or song for the sons of Korah.

1. **H**IS foundation is in the holy mountains. 2. The LORD loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob. 3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

Some make the first words of the psalm to be part of the title; it is a psalm or song, whose subject is the holy mountains; i. e. the temple built in Zion upon mount Moriah. That is the foundation of the argument, or beginning of the psalm. Or, we may suppose the psalmist had now the tabernacle or temple in view, and was in his thoughts contemplating the glories of it, and at length he breaks out into this expression, which has reference, tho' not to what he had written before, yet to what he had thought of; every one knew what he meant when he had said thus abruptly, *its foundations is in the holy mountains.*

Three things are here observed in praise of the temple.

1. That it was founded on the holy mountains, *ver. 1.* The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink, or totter; Christ himself is the foundation of it, which God hath laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains; it is built high, the *mountain of the Lords house is established upon the top of the mountains*, Isa. ii. 2. It is built firm, the mountains are rocky; and on a rock the church is built. The world is founded upon the seas, *Psal. xxiv. 2.* which are continually ebbing and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain, where the ground was rotten; but the church is built upon the everlasting mountains, and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the church is built. *Isa. liv. 10.* The foundation is upon the holy mountains. Holiness is the strength and stability of the church, that is it which will support it, and keep it from sinking; not so much that it is built upon mountains, as that it is built upon holy mountains; upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which, he hath sworn by his holiness; upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints.

2. That God had expressed a particular affection for it, *ver. 2.* *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion*, of the temple, of the houses of doctrine, (so the Chaldee) more than all the dwellings of Jacob, whether in Jerusalem, or any where else in the country. God had said concerning Zion, *this is my rest for ever, here will I dwell*; there he met his people, and conversed with them, received their homage, and shewed them the tokens of his favour, and therefore we may conclude how well he loves those gates. Note, 1. God has a love for the dwellings of Jacob, has a gracious regard to religious families, and accepts their family-worship. 2. Yet he loves the gates of Zion better, not only better than any

any, but better than all the dwellings of Jacob. God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, and family-worship, is family-duty, which must by no means be neglected; yet when they come in competition, publick worship (*cæteris paribus*) is to be preferred before private.

3. That there was much said concerning it in the word of God, *ver. 3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.* We are to judge of things and persons by the figure they make, and the estimate put upon them in and by the scripture. Many base and ill things were spoken of the city of God by the enemies of it, to render it mean and odious, but by him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, glorious things are spoken of it; God said of the temple, *Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually, I have sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever,* 2 Chron. vii. 16. *Beautiful for situation is mount Sion,* Psal. xlviii. 2. These are glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel-church, it is the spouse of Christ, the purchase of his blood, it is a *peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, nor of any that belong to it, nor disown our relation to it, tho' it be turned never so much to our reproach. Since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not one *lota* or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

4. I will make mention of Rahab, and Babylon, to them that know me; behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: this *man* was born there. 5. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. 6. The LORD shall count when he writeth up the people, *that this man was born there.* Selah. 7. As well the fingers as the players on instruments *shall be there:* all my springs are in thee.

Sion is here compared with other places, and preferred before them; the church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth.

1. It is owned, that other places have their glories. *Ver. 4. I will make mention of Rahab, that is, Egypt, and Babylon, to them that know me,* and are about me, and with whom I discourse about publick affairs; behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia, or rather Arabia, we will observe that this man was born there; here and there one famous man, eminent for knowledge and virtue may be produced, that was a native of these countries; here and there one that becomes a profelyte, and a worshipper of the true God. But some give another sense of it; that it is a prophecy or promise of bringing the Gentiles into the church, and uniting of them in one body with the Jews: God saith, *I will reckon Egypt and Babylon with them that know me,* i. e. I will reckon them my people, as much as Israel, when they shall receive the gospel of Christ, and own them, as born in Zion, i. e. born again there, and admitted to the privileges of Sion as freely as a true-born Israelite. They that were strangers and foreigners become *fellow-citizens with the saints,* Eph. ii. 17. A Gentile convert shall stand upon a level with a native Jew; compare, *Isa. xix. 23, 24, 25. The Lord shall say, blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.*

2. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all upon many accounts; for,

(1.) Sion shall produce many great and good men, that shall be famous in their generation, *ver. 5. Of Zion it shall be said of all her neighbours, that this and that man was born in her,* many men of renown for wisdom and piety, and especially for acquaintance with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty. Many prophets and kings that should be greater favourites of heaven, and greater blessings to the earth than ever were bred in Egypt or Babylon. The worthies of the church far exceeded those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter than in perpetual records. *A man, a man, was born in her;* by which some understand Christ, that man, that Son of man, who is fairer than the children of men, he was born at Bethlehem near Zion, and was the glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was put upon the Jewish nation, was, that of them, *as concerning the flesh, Christ came,* Rom. ix. 5. Or, This also may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles, of Sion it shall be said, that the law which went forth out of Sion, the gospel of Christ shall be an instrument to beget many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all.

(2.) Sion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an almighty power. The Highest himself shall undertake to establish her, who can do it effectually; the accession of profelytes out of divers nations, shall be so far from occasioning discord and division, that it shall contribute greatly to Sion's strength; for God himself having founded her upon an everlasting foundation; what-

No. xlv.

ever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.

(3.) Sion's sons shall be registred with honour, *ver. 6. The Lord shall count when he writes up the people,* and takes a catalogue of his subjects, *that this man was born there;* and so is a subject by birth, by the first birth, being born in his house, by the second birth, being born again of his Spirit. When God comes to return with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he shall observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, *Rom. ix. 4.—iii. 1, 2.* For to them much was given, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly, five talents must be improved by those that were entrusted with five. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, and where thou wast born.* Selah. Let those that dwell in Sion mark this, and live up to their profession.

(4.) Sion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph. As well the fingers as the players on instruments shall be there to praise God, *ver. 7. It was much the honour of Sion, and is the honour of the gospel-church, that there God is served and worshipped with rejoicing: his work is done, and done cheerfully;* see *Psal. lxviii. 25. All my springs are in thee, O Sion:* so God saith, he hath deposited treasures of grace in his holy ordinances, there are the springs from which those streams take rise, *which make glad the city of our God,* Psal. xlv. 4. So the psalmist saith, reckoning the springs from which his dry soul must be watred to lie in the sanctuary, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints; the springs of the joy of a carnal worldling, lie in wealth and pleasure, but the springs of the joy of a gracious soul, lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow; it pleased the Father, and all believers are well-pleased with it too, that in him should all fulness dwell.

P S A L M LXXXVIII.

This psalm is a lamentation; one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it doth not conclude as usually the melancholy psalms do, with any of the least intimation of comfort, or joy, but from first to last, it is mourning and wo. It is not upon a publick account that the psalmist here complains: here is no mention of the afflictions of the church, but only upon a personal account, especially trouble of mind, and the grief impressed upon his spirits, both by his outward afflictions, and by the remembrance of his sins, and the fear of God's wrath. It is reckoned among the penitential psalms, and it is well when our fears are thus turned into the right channel, and we take occasion from our worldly grievances, to sorrow after a godly sort. In this psalm we have, (1.) The great pressure of spirit that the psalmist was under, ver. 3—6. (2.) The wrath of God, which was the cause of that pressure, ver. 7, 15—17. (3.) The wickedness of his friends, ver. 8, 18. (4.) The application he made to God by prayer, ver. 1, 2, 9, 13. (5.) His humble expostulations and pleadings with God, ver. 10, 12, 14. Those who are in trouble of mind may sing this psalm feelingly, those that are not ought to sing it thankfully, blessing God that it is not their case.

¶ A song or psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

1. **O** LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. 2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry. 3. For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength. 5. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou remembrest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. 6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. 8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance

quaintance far from me: thou hast made me an abomination unto them: *I am* shut up, and I cannot come forth. 9. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: **L O R D**, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

It should seem by the titles of this and the following psalms that Heman was the penman of the one, and Ethan of the other. There were two of these names that were sons of Zerah the son of Judah, 1 *Chron.* ii. 4, 6. There were two others famed for wisdom, 1 *Kings* iv. 31. where to magnify Solomon's wisdom, he is said to be wiser than Heman and Ethan. Whether the Heman and Ethan that were Levites and præcentors in the songs of Zion, were the same, we are not sure, nor which of these, nor whether any of these were the penmen of these psalms; there was a Heman that was one of the chief singers, who is called the king's seer, or prophet, in the words of God, 1 *Chron.* xxv. 5. it is probable this was too; a seer, and yet could see no comfort for himself, an instructor and comforter of others, and yet himself putting comfort away from him.

The very first words of the psalm are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm. There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness, but before he begins his complaint, he calls God, the God of his salvation; which intimates, both that he looked for salvation, as bad as things were, and that he looked up to God for the salvation, and depended upon him to be the author of it.

Now here we have the psalmist,

1. A man of prayer, one that gave himself to prayer at all times, but especially now he was in affliction: for *is any afflicted? let him pray*, it is his comfort that he had prayed, it is his complaint, that, notwithstanding his prayer, he was still in affliction. He was, (1.) Very earnest in prayer. *I have cried unto thee*, ver. 1. and have *stretched out my hands unto thee*, ver. 9. as one that would take hold on thee, and even catch at the mercy, with a holy fear of coming short, and missing of it. (2.) He was very frequent and constant in prayer, *I have called upon thee daily*, ver. 9. nay, *day and night*, ver. 1. For thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint; God's own elect cry day and night to him: Not only morning and evening, beginning every day and every night with prayer, but spending the day and night in prayer. This is indeed praying always, and then we shall speed in prayer, when we continue instant in prayer. (3.) He directed his prayer to God, and from him expected and desired an answer, ver. 2. *Let my prayer come before thee*, to be accepted of thee, not before men, to be seen of them, as the Pharisees prayers. He doth not desire that men should hear them, but, **L O R D**, *incline thou thine ear unto my cry*, for to that I refer myself, give what answer to it thou pleasest.

2. He was a man of sorrows, and therefore some make him in this psalm a type of Christ, whose complaints on the cross, and sometimes before, were much to the same tune with this psalm. He cries out, ver. 3. *my soul is full of troubles*; so Christ said, *now is my soul troubled*; and in his agony, *my soul is exceeding sorrowful*, like the psalmist's here, even unto death, for he saith, *my life draws nigh unto the grave*. Heman was a very wise man, and a good man, a man of God, and a singer too, and one may therefore suppose him to be a man of a cheerful spirit, and yet now a man of a sorrowful spirit, troubled in mind, and upon the brink of despair. Inward trouble is the worst trouble, and that which sometimes the best of God's saints and servants have been severely exercised with. *The spirit of man*, of the greatest of men will not always sustain the infirmity, but will droop and sink under it; *who then can bear a wounded spirit?*

3. He looked upon himself as a dying man, whose heart was ready to break with sorrow, ver. 5. *Free among the dead*, one of that ghastly corporation; *like the slain that lie in the grave*, whose rotting and perishing no body takes notice of, or is concerned for; nay, whom thou remembrest no more, to protect or provide for the dead bodies, but they become an easy prey to corruption and the worms, they are *cut off from thy hand*, which is used to be employed in supporting them, and reaching out to them; but now there is no more occasion for it, they are cut off from it, and cut off by it; for *God will not stretch out his hand to the grave*, Job xxx. 24. *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit*, as low as possible, my condition low, my spirits low, *in darkness, in the deep*, ver. 6. sinking, and seeing no way open of escape, brought to the last extremity, and ready to give up all for gone. Thus greatly may good men be afflicted, and such dismal apprehensions may they have concerning their afflictions, and such dark conclusions may they sometimes be ready to make concerning the issue of them, through the power of melancholy, and the weakness of faith.

4. He complained most of God's displeasure against him, which infused the wormwood and the gall into the affliction and the misery, ver. 7. *Thy wrath lies hard upon me*; could he have discerned the favour and love of God in his affliction, it had lain light upon him; but it lay hard, very hard, upon him, so that he was ready to sink and faint under it. The impressions of this wrath upon

his spirits, were God's waves with which he afflicted him, which rolled upon him, one on the neck of another, so that he scarce recovered from one dark thought, but he was oppressed with another; these waves beat against him with noise and fury; not some but all God's waves were made use of in afflicting him, and bearing him down. Even the children of God's love, may sometimes apprehend themselves children of wrath, and no outward trouble can lie so hard upon them as that apprehension.

5. It added to his affliction that his friends deserted him, and made themselves strange to him. When we are in trouble, it is some comfort to have those about us that love us, and sympathize with us, but this good man had none such; which gives him occasion not to accuse them, or charge them with treachery, ingratitude and inhumanity, but to complain to God, with an eye to his hand in this part of the affliction, ver. 8. *Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me*, providence had removed them or rendered them incapable of being serviceable to him, or alienated their affections from him, for every creature is that to us, and no more than God makes it to be: if our old acquaintance be shy of us, and those we expect kindness from prove unkind, we must bear that with the same patient submission to the divine will that we do to other afflictions, Job xix. 13. Nay, his friends were not only strange to him, but even hated him, because he was poor and in distress, *thou hast made me an abomination to them*, they are not only shy of me, but sick of me, and I am looked upon by them not only with contempt but with abhorrence. Let none think it strange concerning such a trial as this, when Heman that was so famed for wisdom, yet when the world frowned upon him was neglected, as a vessel in which is no pleasure.

Lastly, He looked upon his case as helpless and deplorable, *I am shut up, and I cannot come forth*, a close prisoner under the arrests of divine wrath, and no way open of escape. He therefore lies down and sinks under his troubles, because he sees not any probability of getting out of them. For thus he bemoaneth himself, ver. 9. *mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction*, and sometimes giving vent to grief by weeping, gives some ease to a troubled spirit. Yet weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears; *mine eye mourns*, but *I cry unto thee daily*; let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together, *I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears*.

10. Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah. 11. Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? 12. Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? 13. But unto thee have I cried, O **L O R D**, and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. 14. **L O R D**, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? 15. *I am* afflicted and ready to die, from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted. 16. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off. 17. They came round about me daily like water, they compassed me about together. 18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

In these verses,

1. The psalmist expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable condition he was in, ver. 10, 11, 12. *Wilt thou do a miraculous work to the dead*, and raise them to life again? Shall those that are dead and buried rise up to praise thee? No, they leave it to their children to rise up in their rooms to praise God, none expects that they should do it; and wherefore should they rise? Wherefore should they live, but to praise God? The life we are born to at first, and the life we hope to rise to at last, must thus be spent. But *shall thy loving kindness to thy people be delivered in the grave*, either by those or to those, that lie buried there, and thy faithfulness to thy promise shall that be told in destruction; shall thy wonders be wrought in the dark, or known there? and thy righteousness in the grave, which is the land of forgetfulness, where men remember nothing, nor are themselves remembered? Departed souls may indeed know God's wonders, and declare his faithfulness, justice, and loving-kindness, but deceased bodies cannot; they can neither receive God's favours in comfort, nor return them in praise. Now we will not suppose these expostulations to be the language of despair, as if he thought God could not help him, or would not, much less do they speak any disbelief of the resurrection of the dead at the last day; but he thus pleads with God for speedy relief; **L O R D**, thou art good, thou art faithful, thou art righteous, these attributes of thine will be made known in my deliverance, but if it be not hastened it will come too late; for I shall be dead, and past relief, dead and not capable of receiving any comfort very shortly. Job often pleaded this, Job vii. 8.—x. 21.